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GROWING WITH BOOKS

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THE BEGINNING

What do you do when a child looks up at you and says, "This is the best book I ever read. Do you have any more like it"? How do you know what it is about the story that has touched that child so deeply? Is the child looking for a story about redemption? About outwitting grown-ups? About animals? Magic? Happy families? Monsters? Adventures? Is the child looking for a fantastic or foreign landscape? Or a familiar one? A story with exquisite and strange language? Or one with the dialect and characters of a home left behind? The range of possibilities is bewildering--as you probably know all too well.

In Growing with Books, we open ways for you, as reader and teacher, to respond to the needs of the child's simple, direct question; to talk about stories in a language that brings you, the child and the book closer together. To share with all the children in your class a love of stories and poems; to help them learn to write as well as read, to become authors themselves; and to encourage them to seek a spectrum of responses to stories, rather than a single right answer. Ultimately, Growing with Books is made up out of a love of stories that we want to share with you. We hope that you will share that love with children--who, in turn, will grow up with a love of sharing stories too.

This is a story about stories--not as they are shut behind closed classroom doors, but as they live and grow in our minds as we live and grow in the world. It is only in childhood, as Graham Greene says in "The Lost Childhood", that stories "have any deep influence on our lives". Like Greene, the writers of Growing With Books know that children's literature is important because what we read as children becomes part of the landscape of our grown-up minds. The contributors share their love and knowledge of stories with you. They write out of a social context that is constantly changing our images of children and childhood--almost too quickly for us to perceive.

It is impossible to cocoon children from the vagaries of life any longer. On any weekend, contemporary children and their parents can be found wearing the same kinds of jeans, tee-shirts and running shoes, watching the same programmes on television, or

pursuing the same trivial board games. Children cannot be seen as innocent any more either. They know (or claim to) many of the adult-world secrets they would have been sheltered from as little as a generation ago. Today, even very young children have access to the six o'clock news as well as Mr. Dressup, and to the daytime soaps as well as Passe Partout.

In sharing language, style of dress and games with their elders, contemporary children are a lot like their medieval counterparts. Instead of seeing children and grown-ups as separate species (as we have for about four hundred years) we see people who grow up. Children experience the world in relation to the one that grown-ups inhabit. And grown-ups know that their adult lives are formed by how they experienced the world as children. So child and adult are interdependent. There is no sudden, complete metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly.

The writers of the essays in Growing with Books speak, eloquently, about how stories can help chart the way through our shifting sensibilities and how children and adults can share in the exploration. Reading is not decoding letters on a page or a comprehension test: "it involves", as it says in Education in the Primary and Junior Divisions, "searching for patterns of meaning, problem-solving, analysis, judgement, evaluation, and synthesis". It is as Graham Greene suggests, about being human.

Growing with Books is not an instruction manual. Meanings of stories come out of conversations, not lectures: conversations between people with different levels of experience and ability. What you find are articles and essays by people who have evolved practical, effective ways of sharing books--poetry, prose, drama, the literature of oral tradition, and information books. They modify their approaches to suit their particular times, places, needs. They listen to the children with whom they work and they know how to interpret what they hear. So, when you read about their approaches, enter their mind-sets not their methodologies. Within the multiplicity of voices represented listen for the ones that resonate for you. Here then, at the beginning, are some of the refrains that ring through the book.

SHARE

The first principle is that stories are for sharing. The figure of the tall teacher handing down the right answers to tidy rows of little children seated at their desks is fading from the classroom.

Answers often kill interpretation. Questions are much more useful and interesting. Still, as humans we prefer "enigmas to muddles" as the critic Frank Kermode says in a book about secrets. He means that problems promise the existence of answers, of truths--if only we could figure out how to find them. Alice in Wonderland says something similar when she thinks she can answer the Mad Hatter's riddle about why a raven is like a writing desk. Alice is pleased when the tea-party conversation turns to something sensible--like riddles. At last, she believes, she will be able to "find out the answer". Riddles are supposed to have answers, so she assumes she can work out the right one. But the Mad Hatter subverts her belief: he hasn't "the slightest idea" what the answer is.

The point is that stories are worth exploring even if there are no absolutely right ways of reading. Child and adult ought to explore stories together, the adult approaching the story in the same spirit of discovery as the child. The principle behind sharing is to help the naïve reader find clues to the ways stories work, to develop techniques of reading--and to explore a variety of answers, not just the right ones.

LISTEN

That brings up the second principle: listening. Children approach stories without the experience of knowing what they are supposed to be about. They have open, unconditioned responses to what they read. Children solve computer problems the same way. They experiment with a variety of solutions and put their imaginations to work exploring options and testing out a range of possible solutions--unlike adults who are not likely to try unfamiliar computer problems in the first place. At least not until they have been told the right way to do them. Unconditioned responses often turn out to be the more original, interesting and

insightful ones, and children bring that freshness to stories, as well as to computer problems. Listen to what they have to say.

MEDIATE

What role does sharing and listening leave for the teacher? That of mediator, not pedant. The teacher mediates between the child and the book. That means developing language, and developing familiarity with the narrative conventions (genre, structure, style, narrative voice) that make stories. It also means being able to read the language of pictures, especially important for new readers because picture books are usually the first stories they encounter.

Ultimately stories become an integral part of the landscape of the reader's mind. If a story, whether for grown-ups or for children, doesn't leave you with something to think about, something to puzzle over, something unsolved and unresolved, then it is a good bet that the story is not a work of literature. It may be something to read--but so are cereal boxes, weather reports and hockey scores. They provide reading material, but they are not works of imaginative literature. As a teacher you don't have to be able to explain what a story is about. A story, unlike a cereal box, is more than the sum of its words.

What you have to do is focus on the points in the story that arouse your interest and your curiosity; the emotions, thoughts, wishes, dreams, beliefs and values that you want to share. And while you are doing that, listen attentively to the kinds of clues that the children give to you about what interests them. We must trust the children to take from the story that which is important to them. In our world adults don't know all the answers. And children know we don't know. That does not mean we abandon the search. It means that we look--together.

A NOTE ON THE DESIGN OF GROWING WITH BOOKS

The articles in this book are by people who care about children and about what children read: classroom teachers, academics, books sellers, poets, critics and book promoters. The chapters are organized to tell a story about stories, but each one is also self-contained. Every chapter begins with a prologue that sketches what the articles are about. An epilogue at the end analyses some of the issues raised and suggests ways to bring those ideas into the classroom. Every epilogue is followed by a short bibliography that gives references for the texts that the authors of the articles in that particular chapter found useful.

These lists are intended as quick reference guides. The selections reflect the books that were in our minds at the time of writing Growing With Books. We are aware of the need to recommend books that contain a balanced diet of social, literary, cultural, historical, nutrients. But stories won't add up to the sum of their elements. The selection decisions were based on a host of considerations (all demanding precedence) from our individual preferences to our feelings about how the books on the list related to each other; from the desire to include comfortable favourites to the desire to expose something new.

Prologue to Chapter One

Literature and Education: What do Stories Have to do with Life?

Stories Are For Understanding
Gordon Wells

The relationships between literature, education and life have always been rather awkward to explore. They are especially so now. We know that children watch television programmes containing scenes of sex and violence but we become morally outraged when they read about similar scenes in books. In the same vein, there is explicit classroom instruction on the dangers of strangers--and vocal, public unease when the same sorts of discussions appear in books. That is the scenario of our social schizophrenia: on the one hand we believe in the need to warn children about potential social dangers, while on the other we reject fictional accounts on the grounds that they are unsuitable for children. What we must understand is that stories create a space where moral and social issues can be explored safely--and without threat.

The social truths presented in the context of a story (unlike those on the television news) are always tempered by the mind (and morality) of the author. Stories, says Aidan Chambers, are "the most democratic form of educational and social activity". They enable us to make sense out of the disorder of events by always speaking "about what happens, to whom, and why".¹

What Gordon Wells demonstrates, in his article based on several years of extensive research, is how children develop the ability to tell stories and how we as adults can help develop those skills: by reading stories to children and encouraging them to make up their own stories. Children who are read to are at an advantage when it comes to learning to read. Stories acquaint children with conventions of narrative and so teach them how to construct their own stories out of events.

1. Aidan Chambers, "Inaugural Ceremony Keynote Address in which You Become the Hero: Children's Literature and the Micro-Electronic Book", Changing Faces: Story and Children in an Electronic Age, IBBY, (Sydney, 1984), pp. 22-3.

When it comes to teaching reading the important thing to remember is that the joy of reading comes first. The values of stories and storytelling explored in this section are heard elsewhere in Growing with Books. The basic precepts are simple: read stories as often and as well as you can. Listen. Respond to children in a way that lets them know you take what they are saying seriously. Tell stories. Encourage children to tell and write stories about what they see, hear and imagine.

STORIES ARE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Gordon Wells

Once upon a time, and a very good time it was, there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo . . .

His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.

He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.

So begins James Joyce's account of the development of a writer of stories: a child inside a story which is itself nested within a narrative reconstruction of early childhood. My own interest in stories started in a rather similar way as a listener to, and reader of, stories. But then, instead of becoming a writer of stories, I became a researcher trying to understand the significance of stories for the development of literacy. A very different concern--or so it seemed to me then.

The Development of Storying

The first clue, in what in retrospect seems rather like a detective story, was the finding of a positive association between ease in learning to read and write and the frequency with which the children I had been studying had stories read to them.² Following up this finding, I began to look more carefully at the recordings we had made of children at home, in order to see whether there were other ways in which stories played a part in their lives. And here Joyce's opening paragraphs offered a further clue.

By beginning his novel with a vignette of family life organized around a story Joyce points, albeit perhaps

1. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 7.

2. G. C. Wells, "Pre-school literacy related activities and success in school", Literacy, Language and Learning, ed. D. Olson, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

unconsciously, to a much more fundamental significance that stories have as organizers of the young child's experience. Without them the kaleidoscope of people, objects and events that succeed each other in the child's life would remain fragmentary, unconnected and essentially meaningless. Like the thread that links a collection of separate stones and makes them into a necklace, 'storying' links events together in a narrative sequence and gives them coherence and significance.

In the first year or two of life there is little overt evidence of this active storying--though that should not lead us to suppose that it is not taking place. Even before children have acquired the resources for conversation their experience is providing examples of some of the most basic narrative motifs: cause and effect seen in actions and their consequences: intentions formed and achieved or thwarted; hunger; pain and separation experienced and then alleviated through the loving ministrations of others. As they make these connections between events children are establishing the basis for their own inner storying--the narrative schemas or frames they will use to make sense of their experience. Then, as they become able to comprehend the speech of others, they hear these same motifs expressed in the comments, questions and explanations of others and have their own inner storying validated and extended.

As the child grows older, though, there begins to be more direct evidence of the interpretative and shaping power of story as, in conversation, he or she attempts to recount experiences to others. At first these accounts tend to be limited to events in which the listener was also involved and are often prompted by an adult, e.g. "Tell Daddy what we did today".³ Only later is the child able to tell about events in which the listener did not share, and this may require considerable adult assistance if the original impulse to link events in a narrative structure is to reach fruition. In the following example, Mark provides the series of (imaginary) events; but it is only with his mother's

3. M. A. K. Halliday, Learning How to Mean (London: Arnold, 1975).

helpful interjections that he is able to construct the narrative sequence.

Mark (aged 2 years 1 month) is looking out of he window. He had previously seen a man working in the garden opposite.

Mark: Where man gone?
Where man gone?

Mother: I don't know
I expect he's gone inside because it's snowing

Mark: Where man gone?
(said with higher pitch)

Mother: In the house

Mark: Uh?

Mother: In the house

Mark: No
No
Gone to shop Mummy

Mother: Gone where?
(the local shop is close to Mark's house)

Mark: Gone shop

Mother: To the shop?

Mark: Yeh

Mother: What's he going to buy

Mark: Er--biscuits

Mother: Biscuits mm

Mark: Uh?

Mother: Mm
What else?

Mark: Er--meat

Mother: Mm

Mark: Meat
Er--sweeties
Buy a big bag sweets

Mother: Buy sweets?

Mark: Yeh
M--er--man buy--
the man buy sweets

Mother: Will he?

Mark: Yeh
Daddy buy sweets
Daddy buy sweets

Mother: Why?

Mark: Oh--er--shop
Mark do buy some--
sweet--sweeties

Mark buy some - um -
I did

By four or five most children are able to manage the narration by themselves and some are able to tell quite long and involved stories provided they have an interested audience.⁴ More often, however, we first see this ability emerging in their imaginative play, either alone or with other children.⁵

In the following example Sam, John and David are playing with a varied set of play-people and animals. David has a cardboard box: this is his 'base'. Sam also has his own territory: a wooden boat, on which he has a family of lions. All around is the sea--the playroom carpet. At this point in their play John, who also has a boat and an assortment of play-people, is torn between joining David on his base or Sam on his boat. The problem is that neither base nor boat has sufficient room for all John's people. As each child contributes from his own imaginary world, it is the jointly constructed narrative line that enables them to integrate those worlds in a collaborative manner and to

4. G. C. Wells, The Meaning Makers (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986), pp. 197-8.

5. See, for example, H. K. Chin and S. B. Heath, "Narrative play in second language learning", The Language Play (Norwood: Ablex, 1986).

manage the inter-personal conflicts that so often arise in the course of play.

(Utterances in italics are spoken in 'play' voices appropriate to the characters concerned.)

Sam	John	David
Now you have to live on your boat (to J. to take this play-people somewhere else)	put down like boat	(to self)'Tend it was (arranging his base)
'Cos there was no room for you (i.e. on the <u> ?</u>	Why? Why do we? (puts people, furniture Pretend we was sending boats back (moves S's boat with the lions on)	etc. into his base)
No that's your boat that's our boat (lions speaking)	No but pretend we was sav--saving them back so people could get um-- That was your fault (to D who has got in his way)	
OK we're living on here (i.e. on boat) Oh we'll die	(begins to put his people on D's base)	We--we've got all the luggage I'm going to sleep
	(pretends to cry) All our luggage is--is--	On of er--one of our boy-friends is crying in a corner (pretends to cry)
		Pretend one of the-- the--their children was crying in a corner (pretends to cry)
Why was that?		It was because they didn't like being on the--(pretends to cry)
They didn't like being on land		

--all squashed up
did they? (i.e. on
the base)

No they didn't like being--

They went outside
didn't they?

Yeh and they had to
go out And it was poison
on the sea and they had
to die didn't they?

No they didn't
They got on this boat
(i.e. the lions' boat)
They jumped on to there
They was good jumpers

There is no doubt that the stories that children have heard told or read to them, or the ones they see on television, contribute very substantially to the resources they draw on in such play, and to the language in which they are able to conduct it. In this, as in other respects, the reading of stories from books has a particularly important role to play. The three boys in the previous example are all read to very regularly and the effects are apparent in the range of roles they are able to take on and in the understanding they show of the thoughts and feelings of their imaginary characters.

The same is equally true of course as, a little later, children begin to learn to read and to start writing stories themselves. The quality of their experience as listeners to other peoples' stories and the richness of their own storying in dramatic play are a major influence on the ease with which they learn to make sense of print and on the quality of the stories they compose themselves. Those who have heard how written stories sound are quicker to recognize these characteristic uses of language when they meet them in the books they read and to gain control over them in their own writing. However, even without this advantage, every child has an ability to create stories, which will manifest itself if only we provide encouragement and the conditions in which it can flourish.⁶

6. D. Graves, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1982).

The Deeper Significance of Stories

So far, I have tried briefly to trace the development of storying through the primary years and to show how stories provide a natural entry into literacy. But as I was working on this material I read an article by Richard Gregory, an eminent neuropsychologist, that extended my understanding of the significance of storying very considerably. In this article, the purpose of which was to reappraise the status of psychology as a scientific discipline, what particularly intrigued me was his emphasis on 'brain fictions' as a unifying concept for explaining the diversity of human mental activities.⁷ In perceiving objects in the world, for example, we interpret incoming sense data by constructing from past experience a framework, or fiction, in terms of which they make sense. But in research in the natural sciences, too, the interpretation of evidence depends crucially on theory, which although more abstract and more general, is another form of fiction.

Put in slightly different terms, what Gregory seemed to be arguing was that storying was a much more central characteristic of the human response to experience than I had previously recognized. And, thinking along these lines, I recalled the distinction that Britton had drawn between the two roles of participant and spectator in human affairs.⁸ In the participant role, he has argued, we are concerned to get things done, to achieve our purposes; in the spectator role, however, when we are temporarily removed from the arena of action, we reflect on what has happened, recasting events in the shape of a story in order to perceive and savour their significance. Britton's interest was in language and in the different functions it performs: as a form of action in the participant role and as an organizer of reflection

7. R. Gregory, "Psychology: Towards a Science of Fiction", New Society (23 May 1974), pp. 439-41.

8. J. Britton, Prospect and Retrospect (London: Heinemann, 1982).

in the role of spectator.⁹ And it is clear that, although the brain can construct fictions and use them to guide actions without the need for language, as Gregory has shown, the availability of language immensely enhances the power of these fictions by enabling us to capture them for conscious consideration and reworking and to share these processes with others.

Could it indeed be that it is in storying that language makes its most basic contribution to thinking, by providing the symbols and structures from which our stories--narratives, interpretations and theories--are constructed? This is certainly one way of understanding the significance that is attributed to language, for example, by the writers of the Bullock Report, as can be seen if we substitute 'story' for 'symbol' in the following quotation:

. . . . man's individual, social and cultural achievements can be rightly understood only if we take into account that he is essentially a symbol-using animal. By this account what makes us typically human is the fact that we symbolize, or represent to ourselves, the objects, people and events that make up our environment, and do so cumulatively, thus creating an inner representation of the world as we have encountered it. The accumulated representation is on the one hand a storehouse of past experience and on the other a body of expectations regarding what may yet happen to us. In this way we construct for ourselves a past and a future, a retrospect and a prospect; all our significant actions are performed within this extended field or framework, and no conscious act, however trivial, is uninfluenced by it.¹⁰

Seen from this perspective, storying is a basic form of mental activity--perhaps the distinctively human one and one that

9. James Britton, "Writing and the Story World", Explorations in the Development of Writing (Chichester: Wiley, 1983).

10. Sir Alan Bullock et al., A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Inquiry Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1975), p. 47.

is preeminently carried on through the medium of language.¹¹ Furthermore, stories are clearly not limited to those that are read or told to us by other people. We each of us carry on a continuous 'storying' in our own heads, as we attempt to relate events to a story framework in order to interpret them and use the same frameworks to plan future actions towards the achievement of our intentions. 'Making sense' of something is thus to a very great extent being able to make up a plausible story about it.

Reassessing the importance of stories in young children's development from this present vantage point, we can now see that the stories that are told to them, and are acted out in the routines of their everyday lives, support and enrich the threads of their inner storying to provide them with a framework of interpretation within which they fashion their understanding of the world and, through understanding, come to be able to control it. And from this it is a short step to the recognition that, for each of us, the reality we inhabit is to a very great extent a distillation of the stories that we have shared: not only the narratives that we have heard and told, read or had read to us, or seen enacted in drama or now on television, but also the anecdotes, explanations and conjectures that are drawn upon in everyday conversation in our perpetual attempts to understand who we are and where we're going.

Storying across the Curriculum

With this enhanced understanding of the fundamental significance of storying I began to look at the place of stories in school and in education more generally. What I found was that, beyond the primary years, they received little official recognition except in the literature class. School is for learning about the 'real' world and, for most teachers, a concern with stories seems frivolous and pupils' personal anecdotes are perceived to be an annoying and irrelevant interruption of the official matter of the curriculum. Stories are all very well for

11. B. Hardy, "Towards a poetics of fiction: an approach through narrative", The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading, ed. M. Meek et al., (London: Bodley Head, 1977), pp. 3-23.

pre-schoolers and for learning to read and write. But once the skills of literacy have been acquired the emphasis should shift to facts, to real-world knowledge and the subject disciplines in terms of which that knowledge is organized. Such a view, I now believe, is fundamentally mistaken, and in this final section I wish to challenge the assumptions on which it is based and to argue instead for a recognition of the importance of stories right across the curriculum.

The first mistake is in assuming that the imaginative and affective response to experience is of less value than the practical and analytic or, indeed, in thinking that they are in competition with each other. A fully mature response is one that achieves a balance of the practical, the moral and the aesthetic. To help students to achieve such a balance should be the concern of all teachers, whatever the curriculum content for which they are responsible. The importance of this is fast becoming apparent with respect to science and technology: unless our students learn to respond to scientific knowledge in a balanced manner there is little hope that their world will remain worth inhabiting. But the same need for a balanced approach to knowledge applies equally in other subject areas and in all areas. Stories have a major role to play in the form of biographies, historical novels, newspaper and magazine features, etc. and, of course, the stories that students bring in speech or writing from their own experience.

The second mistaken assumption concerns the simple opposition that is often drawn between 'fact' and 'fiction': that the former is true whilst the latter is largely unreliable and irrelevant. Quite apart from the difficulty of drawing a clear distinction between the two, this assumption over-simplifies the complex manner in which fact and fiction inter-penetrate in all branches of knowledge. As Gregory showed, in the article already referred to, the facts with which most subjects of the curriculum are concerned are only facts within the framework of some theory, and theories share many of the imaginative 'as if' characteristics of fiction. Moreover, as theories change through radical reconceptualizations of the subject matter with which they deal, so do the facts they underpin. At the same time, the stories that

are classed as fiction are rarely far removed from the 'facts' of everyday experience: the characters have hopes and intentions and their actions have consequences just as in real life. To be believable the action must take place within a possible world which is governed by the same sort of consistent laws as we believe to operate in the 'real' world. In sum, there is much less of a division between 'fact' and 'fiction' than is often assumed to be the case.

In more humorous vein, Rosen makes two related and equally serious points when he claims:

. . . if you aspire to becoming an invertebrate paleontologist you must be someone given to storytelling. What is geology but a vast story which geologists have been composing and revising throughout the existence of their subject? Indeed what has the recent brouhaha about evolution been but two stories competing for the right to be the authorized version, the authentic story, a macro-narrative. There are stories wherever we turn. How do we understand foetal development except as a fundamental story in which sperm and ovum triumph at the dénouement of parturition? Every chemical reaction is a story compressed into the straitjacket of an equation. Every car speeds down the road by virtue of that well-known engineer's yarn called the Ottocycle¹².

If theories are 'macro-narratives', similar in many respects to the stories that we class as fiction, what about the way in which theories are constructed and knowledge built up? Is that not too a form of storying--both in the succession of contributions of different thinkers to an intellectual discipline (for example, the progression in physics from Galileo to Newton to Einstein) and in the development of the understanding of any particular thinker? And so we return to the point with which we started: the role of stories and storying in the development of each individual.

12. Harold Rosen, "The Nurturing of Narrative", Stories and Meanings (National Association of Teachers of English, 1984), p. 16.

It is readily accepted that young children find it easier to assimilate new ideas when they are presented within the framework of a story. Only gradually do they move from the particularized example to the principle. However, even older students find that illustrative anecdotes make general principles easier to grasp and, given the opportunity, they will frequently look for such anecdotal examples in their own experience as they talk through new ideas in the attempt to make the connection between 'academic' knowledge and the 'action' knowledge of everyday life.¹³ Rather than treat such storying as irrelevant, therefore, we should encourage it, recognizing that, as Rosen puts it:

- (a) Inside every non-narrative kind of discourse there stalk the ghosts of narrative and
- (b) Inside every narrative there stalk the ghosts of non-narrative discourse¹⁴.

Of course it is important that students should come to understand the difference between the two modes and be able to handle them both effectively. But the best route to the achievement of the more abstract and decontextualized formulation is likely, both developmentally and in the tackling of each new problem, to take them through the domain of stories, their own and other peoples'. Certainly this is the course I have followed in arriving at my present understanding.

If, as I have tried to show, storying is indeed the most fundamental way of grappling with new experience, we should be prepared to recognize the value of stories and encourage them at all stages of development. Right across the curriculum, storying provides a major route to understanding.

13. C. Barnes, From Communication to Curriculum (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

14. Rosen, p. 12.

Epilogue To Chapter One: Life and Literature In the Classroom

"Relationships between literature, education and life are all very interesting.", you say. "But what do they have to do with stories in the classroom"? A great deal.

Children tell stories out of what they see and hear and do in their everyday lives. The stories that are read or told to them re-enter the world of the stories they tell. Children flicker between the everyday landscape and the imaginary, between the stories they hear and the ones they create. Armed with the knowledge that children make up stories about their everyday lives, you can encourage the reading and writing of stories built on the same model: real family stories about "what happens to whom and why", stories about life and death. Children are not innocent. As Gordon Wells shows, children have serious concerns about the nature of the grown-up world and about how to make sense of it.

He describes a life/death scenario that three little boys create about who is going to live and why. The children modify the fiction as they make it up--with the result that the story comes to life as something happening from moment to moment.

In case you think that the behaviour of the children in this story is morbidly aberrant, it is worth remembering some great literary moments of the same type: Little Women is about girls playing at mothers and funerals; Charlotte's Web is about the threatened death of a pig and the actual death of a spider; Anne of Green Gables is about love and death; and the animal stories by Ernest Thompson Seton always end with the death of the protagonist.

Information about how children connect their everyday concerns with the ones in their stories gives you, as teacher, some clues about the kinds of stories they might be interested in. Two elements stand out: children share grown-up concerns of the world, including difficult ones of selfishness, choice and mortality; and they explore those concerns by telling stories.

Find a story you like. Then think about what kind of reading makes the story powerful for you--and how you can convey that sense to your class. That is where literary criticism and

reading theory and discussions about story come in. Make the background theory part of your understanding of how to read stories. Then use what feels important to you to suggest the kinds of questions you ask about the primary material. Don't be put off by theory. It is just a story, a fiction if you like. It helps you (as an experienced reader) understand what you are doing and why by exposing you to a circle of ideas outside your classroom. If your own experience of the primary text is rich and varied, then you can convey even abstract insights to the children in your class--through your own sensitivity.

There are ways of finding stories in stories. Look for gaps in the story, incomplete descriptions, or places where the pictures say something other than what the words say. Ask about the "missing pieces". In Rosie's Walk, for instance, children can be encouraged to explore for themselves--perhaps through role playing--the relationships between the threat of the fox and the obliviousness of the hen. Or you could talk about how the pictures and the words tell different stories; how the words play straight man to the slapstick comedy routine of the pictures. Or how Rosie and the fox resemble the cartoon Roadrunner and Coyote.

For older children, a comparison between three illustrated versions of "Rapunzel" (for example, one by Felix Hoffmann, first published in German in 1949; one told and illustrated by Jutta Ash in 1982; and one told by Barbara Rogasky and illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman in 1982)¹ offers a more complex, more disturbing study of the relationships between words and pictures--and between literature and life. As is the case with most fairy tales, the story of Rapunzel is straightforward and it is certainly not very long. The moral and ethical issues it presents, however, open up fundamental human questions about desire, theft, deceit, responsibility, punishment, justice, cruelty and redemption.

Something very strange happens from version to version. With regard to the good/evil qualities of the setting and of the

1. F. Hoffmann, Rapunzel (London: Oxford, 1960); J. Ash, Rapunzel (London: Anderson, 1982); B. Rogasky, Rapunzel (New York: Holiday House, 1982).

characters, different stories are told--and very different sets of values are expressed. Hoffman's version is the most conventional and traditional. He tells a story about thick, stolid-looking peasants who, because they desire food, are wrongly robbed of their child by an ugly giant of a witch. The witch is shown running off with the screaming baby Rapunzel tucked under her arm like so much lettuce. In the end, Rapunzel lives to establish her own family. And the witch is punished by an avenging bird who cuts her down to size (the size of "a shrivelled apple", it says in the text) and makes baby bird-food out of her.

Jutta Ash and Rogasky/Hyman tell a story that is probably quite close to current sensibilities in its recognition of fairytales as tangible accounts of psychological truths. Both women tell Rapunzel as a story about redemption, about growing up and being separated from one's mother, and going out into the world. The witch in the 1982 versions subverts the stereotype of unjustly robbed parents and wicked witch. In fact, the witch almost seems to rescue Rapunzel--from a teenage mother who is not old enough to look after a baby. In the Rogasky/Hyman version, Rapunzel's mother is a child-like figure, so small that she has to stand on a stool to look out the window to see the rampion she wants so much. The witch, on the other hand, looks like a wise woman.

What is most apparent in the comparison of the three versions of Rapunzel is that it is quite difficult to tell the story without imposing a positive or negative charge on the characters and events. So when you share it with children, look consciously and carefully, in the words and in the pictures, for the kind of story that is being told.

Consider, for example, whether the landscape is barren or lush? Does that alter the reader's response? Are Rapunzel's parents to be pitied for losing their child because of a minor theft? Or are they stupid and greedy? And does the witch really rescue Rapunzel and free the parents from the responsibility of looking after a child whom they are clearly too irresponsible to look after? Is the witch a benign old grandmother? Or is she selfish and wicked? Should the witch be pitied for her desire to lock Rapunzel away from the world? Or should she be chastized?

Does Rapunzel deceive the witch innocently or deliberately? Is she a princess? Or a peasant? And what about the ending? Does the loss and blinding of her prince, and the birth of her illegitimate babies, constitute punishment for her crime of deceiving the witch? Is she now redeemed and entitled to happiness? What does Rapunzel's hair have to do with all this? And what about the tower?

These are only very basic suggestions on how to open up the story. You have to find the issues that intrigue you and your class--with your very particular set of social, cultural, religious, ethical and moral values always in mind. There are no easy answers. But the more carefully you listen to your students, the more you understand about where their interests lie, the better chance you will have to enter a dialogue with them, to mediate between them and the story--and so connect stories with the human values of everyday life.

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Prologue to Chapter Two

What Are Stories About? Being Human

Myth, Legend and Fairytale
Johan Aitken

Stories are about being human: and, like people, they are rather less fragile than they appear. As a case in point, a small group of Old English elegies comes to mind. They were probably composed sometime in the tenth century in England.

Several of the elegies are spoken by a lone minstrel who tells about wandering cold and friendless through the brutish landscape of Anglo-Saxon England. That landscape becomes a metaphor for his own isolation and desolation--as do the decaying vestiges of ancient Roman roads and buildings that litter that landscape. The lesson in the landscape is that the well-developed communities that lived in the structures have long since vanished. Only decaying buildings remain.

The elegies survive only by chance. Most Old English manuscripts--those that escaped being used to wrap up medieval garbage--were lost forever on October 23, 1731, in the fire that demolished the Cotton Library at Ashburnham House, Westminster, where the manuscripts were housed. Only about thirty-thousand lines of Old English literature are extant today.

Despite the apparently obscure connection, dead-language Old English poems have a great deal to do with the idea that stories are about being human. The elegies are meditations on the transitory nature of the material world: appropriate, as most of the texts are lost. A kind of double story of loss appears. The poems record the loss of a civilization. And the manuscripts that contain the poems only barely survive as artifacts.

Yet, within all this desolation there is something very much alive. It is contained in a poem by a wandering minstrel--he identifies himself as "Deor", and so gives his name to the poem. In contemplating his own personal misery through a lens of other stories about decay, his own story come to life.

Deor's refrain recalls the vitality of stories: "Thaes ofereode; thisses swa maeg". "That has passed over; So may this".

He means his personal desolation. Stories transcend the personal and the material. They are not fragile after all.

A thousand years later Deor's refrain still transmits the physical ache in his story. The Roman ruins are still visible in the English countryside, a little more ruined than when Deor wandered through them. But his musings are as alive at this moment as they were for him when he wrote them. The words are not meaningful because they survive, but because the story the words tell survives.

This section is about the incredible vitality and tenacity of stories--despite their lack of physical substance. Stories do not live as artifacts or buildings, not even as words on a page. Stories live in people. In less technological societies storytellers are not dismissed as a cultural extravagance. They are valuable commodities living in the thick of their cultures as historians, genealogists, political advisors, shamans and warriors--making visible the social and cultural fabric of their communities.

A thoughtful and affectionate account of the humanity of stories is "Myth, Legend and Fairytale: Serious Statements of Our Existence" by Johan Aitken. Her easy grasp of Freudian, Feminist and Marxist literary theory as applied to traditional literature is never out of touch with the human element. She explains how the injustices of society can be tempered through the "sustenance of imaginative art" and how archetypal stories provide the models of our personal belief systems.

Stories allow the reader, the listener, to transcend the world as it is experienced and enter the world of human possibility.

MYTH, LEGEND AND FAIRY TALE
AS "SERIOUS STATEMENTS OF OUR EXISTENCE"

Johan Lyall Aitken

I The Territory Defined

There was a boy who used to sit in the twilight and listen to his great-aunt's stories.

She told him that if he could reach the place where the end of the rainbow stands he would find there a golden key.

"And what is the key for?" the boy would ask. "What is it the key of? What will it open?"

"That nobody knows," his aunt would reply. "He has to find that out."

"I suppose, being gold", the boy once said, thoughtfully, "that I could get a good deal of money for it if I sold it."

"Better never find it than sell it," returned his aunt.

And then the boy went to bed and dreamed about the golden key.

Now all that his great-aunt told the boy about the golden key would have been nonsense, had it not been that their little house stood on the borders of Fairyland. For it is perfectly well known that out of Fairyland nobody can ever find where the rainbow stands. The creature takes such good care of its golden key, always flitting from place to place, lest anyone should find it! But in Fairyland it is quite different. Things that look real in this country look very thin indeed in Fairyland, while some of the things that here cannot stand still for a moment, will not move there. So it was not in the least absurd of the old lady to tell her nephew such things about the golden key.¹

As Elizabeth Cook observes:

In rough and ready phrasing myths are about gods, legends are about heroes, and fairy tales are about woodcutters and princesses . . . Critics take an endless interest in the finer differences between them, but the common reader is more struck by the

1. G. MacDonald, The Golden Key (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1967), pp. 1-3.

ways in which they all look rather²like each other,
and indeed merge into one another.

A glance at my bookshelf reveals the following titles: Myths and Fairy Tales, Fairy Tales and Legends, Myths and Legends, Folk and Fairy Tales, and Legends and Folk Tales. I know from my close association with the innards of these collections that little or no differentiation is made regarding the type of the tale. Cinderella, for example, is included without ceremony or comment in collections of myths, of legends, of fairy tales and of folk tales, indicating that the proverbial common reader is not the only one who is "struck by the ways in which (these tales) look rather like each other".

My emphasis will be upon tales "merging into one another". Common denominators will be stressed. While there are many collectors, compilers, collaborators, revisionists, editors and such involved in the literary and book production of these stories, they are all traditional in the sense that they either have no precise authorship much later than the time of Homer, or, as in the case of Andersen and Wilde, they follow a carefully circumscribed pattern and shape. These traditional tales cross the bridge from reality to fantasy in order to make what Isak Dinesen has called "serious statements about our existence". They are about our deepest fears--our nightmares, and about our highest hopes--our dreams. Their genius:

gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are re-opened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives.³

II The Territory Under Siege

It may seem misguided pedagogy to look unflinchingly at the case against the genre I consider most fabulous and fertile and

2. E. Cook, The Ordinary and the Fabulous (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 1.

3. C. S. Lewis, Introduction to Phantastes and Lilith, by George MacDonald (Grand Rapids: Erdman's, 1964), p. 10.

which I shall be advocating for use as either the foundation of the Language Arts/English programme or the centre depending upon how one prefers to design curriculum. However, a contemporary apology for myth would be dishonest and ephemeral if it did not take into account the challenge of much current criticism to what Jane Yolen calls children's "birthright: the myths, fairy tales, fantasies and folklore that are their proper legacy".⁴ "Why", queries Ursula LeGuin, "are we so "afraid of dragons?"⁵

While many teachers may agree that "myth, legend and fairy tale are the only basics worth getting back to",⁶ many do not. Even those who do cannot be unaware of or unaffected by, the clanging and often convincing challenges to their use in schools, libraries and story-telling festivals. The charge is rarely, if ever, based exclusively upon aesthetic or literary criteria: it is usually based primarily upon analysis of content and a particular vision or interpretation of that content. There are many theorists--political, sexual, sociological, psychological, to name a few--who from their own perspectives have questioned the wisdom of sharing myth, legend and fairy tale with children. They seem to have forgotten, temporarily at least, that "works of literature are not things to be contemplated but powers to be absorbed".⁷

Many political theorists demonstrate this kind of amnesia when, for example, they see myth and fairy tale as tools of subversion, and legend a perpetuation of racial stereotyping. All the arts have been repeatedly assailed as harbingers of capitalist decadence, revolutionary fervour, bourgeois thought, fascist imperialism and so on. Jack Zipes argues effectively in Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion that such was the case in Germany at the time of the rise of the Third Reich. The present

4. J. Yolen, Touch Magic (New York: Philomel, 1981), p.14.

5. U. LeGuin, The Language of the Night (New York: Putnam's, 1979), p. 39.

6. J. Aitken, "Making it New", Indirections (Sept. 1983), p. 21.

7. N. Frye, "Expanding the Boundaries of Literature" Unpublished Paper, 1984.

day Marxist charge of elitism in myth is also important to consider. There is an undeniable preponderance of royalty in fairy tales, and of gods in myth. As Robertson Davies ponders in his review of The Uses of Enchantment: "And what about all those kings and queens and princes and princesses? Where do they fit into the life of the child who has been suckled on the chemical pap of fake republicanism and fake democracy?" There is stress upon ultimate harmony, although strangely enough, some of the tales are profoundly revolutionary. These are genuine concerns. Sexism is another of the charges that must be taken seriously.

For the unknown goddess

Lady, the unknown goddess,
we have prayed long enough only
to Yahweh the thunder god.

Now we should pray to you again
goddess of a thousand names and faces
Ceres Venus Demeter Isis
Inanna Queen of Heaven
or by whatever name
you would be known

you who sprang from the sea
who are present in the moisture of love
who live in the humming cells
of all life
who are rain
with its million soft fingers

and you who are earth
you with your beautiful ruined face
wrinkled by all
that your children have done to you

sunlike lady
crowned with the whirling planets.

Lady of peace, of good counsel,
of love, of wisdom

we invoke your name
which we no longer know

and pray to you
to restore our humanity
as we restore your divinity.⁸

Elizabeth Brewster

Feminist theorists have pointed to what many consider a rigid portrayal of sex and age roles in myth, legend and fairy tale. One cannot help but share the frustration of Liv, a mother in middle life, a travel agent, and someone who, as her professor husband says, "does all the business in our house, everything down to having the cars serviced" when she angrily retorts, "I don't

8. E. Brewster, "For the unknown goddess", In Search of Eros (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1974), p. 51.

care about Venus or Mars or Vulcan! What about Mars' wife?"⁹ That certain tales rendered in versions dictated by a patriarchal society reinforce the already dominant refrain in education of "See Dick Run, See Jane Sit" is undeniable. Jennifer Waelti-Walters claims that:

fairy tales teach girls to accept at least a partial loss of identity, and thus endanger all the relationships in which they must take part in a lifetime. These relationships are further jeopardized by the fact that the same tales transmit to boys an overt possessor/object, master/slave relationship pattern, the playing out of which will reinforce the self-destructive¹⁰ victim pattern of behaviour taught to girls.

When she is examining Beauvoir's Les Belles Images she sees Laurence, whose role has been that of subservient female, achieving:

an integrated self and a sense of her own worth. She will not be tormented by the loss of 'femininity' that comes with age. Her sense of self is no longer dependent upon her market value as a decorative object gracing her husband's collection. Reflecting nobody, she need fear no rival in her¹¹ mirror. The queen who will not kill is not dead.

It is generally rewarding to identify fairy tale patterns throughout literature and what Waelti-Walters detects in Les Belles Images is the reflection of a common fairy tale motif.

Psychological interpretations of myth, legend and fairy tale provide a curious mixture of opinion and well-developed theory, of ideology run rampant and thoughtful, well-supported analysis. Sometimes when a theorist is intimate with psychological insights

9. R. Wiebe, My Lovely Enemy (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), p. 33.

10. J. Waelti-Walters, Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination (Montreal: Eden Press, 1982), pp. 7-8.

11. Waelti-Walters, p. 44.

but has only a nodding acquaintance with literature the results can be bizarre: not only words, it seems, but stories as well can mean anything we want them to mean. In Tom Lehrer's satiric couplet:

I can tell you things about Peter Pan
And the Wizard of Oz--there's a dirty old man.¹²

Freudian, neo-Freudian, Jungian theories of Little Red Riding Hood can make a mere mortal feel that she has been either terribly retarded or frightfully repressed, or both, to have missed all that was going on right under or somewhere under her very nose! Much of this theory, however, must be taken to heart as well as head for it speaks to us of the nourishing, healing and sustaining aspects of myth, legend and fairy tale, and will not be denied. As that most influential crusader for traditional lore, Bruno Bettelheim, advises:

The deep inner conflicts originating in our primitive drives and our violent emotions are all denied in much of modern children's literature, and so the child is not helped in coping with them

...
The fairy tale, by contrast, takes these existential anxieties and dilemmas very seriously and addresses itself directly to them: the need to be loved and the fear that one is thought worthless; the love of life, and the fear of death. Further, the fairy tale offers solutions in ways that the child can grasp on his level of understanding.¹³

Many Jungian, and many humanistically-inclined Freudian, scholars advocate teaching myth, legend and fairy tale, and we have need of their illuminations in our own reflection and study. They become part of the siege upon the territory only when they

12. T. Lehrer, That Was the Year That Was, LP Record, Reprise 6179.

13. B. Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 10.

cease, in Tolkien's words, to read myth, legend and fairy tale as "tales" and insist upon studying them as "curios".¹⁴

One feature common to all detractors and dislocators of myth, legend and fairy tale is their obvious conviction as to the power of these traditional tales. If they wish to banish them from education, as Plato did the poets from his Republic, they are acknowledging, as he did, that Literature is pretty potent stuff. The second feature of those who would lay siege to the territory or subvert it to their own narrow purposes is a profound confusion, not generally experienced by children, between the imaginative worlds created by myth, legend and fairy tale and the rather more mundane and limited "real" world in which, for most of our lives, we must move and have our being.

III The Territory Defended

Elizabeth Cook sagely concludes that:

the fixed point of a myth or a fairy tale lies in its own concrete nature; not in any of the things that it suggests to different readers, and not in its conjectural origins.¹⁵

Then, reminiscent of Levi-Strauss, she adds "a myth is everything that it has been and everything that it may become".¹⁶

I shall now proceed to a defence of the turf Yolen has identified as rightfully belonging to children--and to all humankind who, as T. S. Eliot several times reminds us, "cannot bear very much reality".

While there are many serious schools of criticism which are purposefully and productively, like tigers at the gate, forcing the scholar/teacher to re-examine myth, legend and fairy tale for use in school, I shall simply deal with the three already mentioned for purposes of symmetry and brevity and also because

14. J.R.R. Tolkien, "Children and Fairy Stories" in Only Connect. Ed. by S. Egoft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 111.

15. Cook, p. 3.

16. Cook, p. 3.

they are among the most penetrating and influential: Marxist, Feminist and Freudian. They also combine and conjoin in many instances, but I shall leave the reader to consider them in concert. It is quite difficult enough to respond to them individually.

A little girl kneeling and painting on a large canvas spread out on the floor--in a position only a four-year-old can assume with grace and comfort--splashing about great gobs of blue paint and chatting to her neighbour:

I used to be really scared of my dad, like, you know, he was a king or something.

The language of fairy tale is helping this child describe the already-deposed monarch of her ménage. Parents and, alas, sometimes teachers, in their apparent omnipotence, are the queens and kings of early childhood. Myth, legend and fairy tale give us assurance that we will grow up, that we will get out from under, that our turn will come.

Even when children and adults make every effort to live in a collective of equals, the adults simply are, for a time, physically larger and significantly more worldly-wise. Without seeking any dirty dominance or sickly submission, they are perceived by children as queens and kings of their castles, however puny and poverty-ridden those structures may be.

That there is a great deal of social mobility in tales one must admit. There is a good deal of movement from rags to riches as reward for goodness, courage or cunning. The implications are certainly there in many traditional tales that satins and fine houses are more desirable than draughty thatched-roofed cottages and oatmeal once a day. The same "message", more cruelly and crassly presented, is everywhere in our society without the balance of justice and the sustenance of imaginative art. The symbolism is rarely lost upon children who care, above all, for the yarn. To be a queen or a king is to be in control of one's life--something all children both yearn for--and dread. If any adult is attempting to use any course or content in the service of any ideology, it is no longer genuine education. Genuine education raises questions: it never provides pat answers. The

intention of the teacher is all-important. If it is to tell a tale of magic upon which the starving imagination can feed and thrive, well and good. There is, as Stanley Fish observes, never any single text in any class. The Marxist critic is helpful, however, in warning of the potential danger when any content is deliberately subverted for ideological purposes.

The Feminist charge of sharply-drawn and rigidly-defined sex roles in myth, legend and fairy tale cannot be dealt with until a number of points have been conceded. "He is to purvey and she to smile", as Jane Austen said, is, for the message-hunter, what she may find. But there are other ways of interpreting tales than as paradigms for sexual modelling.

We are all a combination of Penelope and Ulysses in varying proportions and at various times of the year and of our lives. In the spring, for example, "thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages"--we yearn for the open road, perhaps like Molly Bloom for a new companion each spring - but as Chaucer knew, any excuse will do when the fit is on. Very few of the group in his tales have as their sole motive "the hooly blisful martir for to seke".

In the winter some of us, Ulysses-like, head for the hills, since the Aegean is not too handy, but many of us feel with Eliot that while spring disturbs, winter protects, and the Penelope in us who loves hearth and home predominates. A quick survey of one's acquaintances will reveal many female Ulysseans and many male Penelopeans. And why not? All the evidence is not in, at any rate, as far as sex-role identification in response to story is concerned and we may be permitted some healthy skepticism.

That myth, legend and fairy tale have been twisted to suit the purposes of patriarchy is no doubt accurate enough, but these tales have no monopoly on this tendency in the school curriculum. Revisionist criticism is necessary but vision is also helpful. We may not applaud theft, murder and generally taking the initiative, but it can scarcely be called passive. This is what Gretel does in a tale in which her older brother spends most of his time in a cage. While Zeus can triumph over Hera, she manges to make life difficult in return and many other goddesses enjoy pushing gods--to say nothing of mere mortals--all over the place.

Betty Booker of Betty Booker's Bridle is definitely in charge of everything from Skipper Perkins on. Ruth leaves her own country and people to go away with her mother-in-law to a new land. It is her choice, and it works out well. Search as I might, I have never found Mr. Pig and Ms. Pig has been bringing up those three little ones and sending them off to seek their fortunes since the tale began.

Bettelheim, who stands accused by Marxists, Feminists and fellow Freudians, is still going strong. One of his most "useful" observations is that myth, legend and fairytale provide the child with a "rich and variegated fantasy life . . . which can help prevent his imagination from getting stuck within the narrow confines of a few anxious or wish-fulfilling daydreams circling around a few narrow preoccupations".¹⁷ Bettelheim himself is not in favour of providing children with the framework some psychoanalytic theory has unearthed in the tales. One can only hope that teachers agree with him on this point and are not going to foist adult self-consciousness upon children any earlier than it will come of its own accord:

A reader who takes his eyes off the story that is in front of him, and looks for something else behind it, will eventually see nothing but the theories he would have held whether he had read the story or not. To a reader who is attending to stories as they are, and above all to a child hearing them for the first time, Hades 'means' anything and everything he knows that can be described¹⁸ by the words dark, cold, misty, formless".

The many variations of the tales and the changes, to and fro, from sad endings to happy ones and from just deserts to abundant mercy, attest to roles adult anxieties have always played in controlling and shaping what children hear and read.

In one era, for example, the gingerbread man is eaten up; in another, he becomes a gingerbread boy and is of the lineage of

17. Bettelheim, p. 119.

18. Cook, p. 4.

Isaac and Pinocchio--the child of aged people, who long for progeny. In this version, the gingerbread boy does not get eaten up. He has a narrow escape and runs home to the little old man and right into the waiting arms of the little old woman. As was mentioned earlier, we get two very different creation stories in Genesis and the genealogy of gods and goddesses on Olympus is often impossible to disentangle. I refer not only to shafts of sunlight, swans and such, but also to conflicting versions of who, for example, sired Persephone.

In The Three Bears the version of old woman/witch--the interloper who eats food and sleeps on beds that belong to others and is duly punished--gives way to Goldilocks, a naturally inquisitive, amoral little girl who somehow turns the story round and makes the bears villains in their own house because they don't much approve of her antics.

The stories of Arthur are so varied that in some he has a slight footing in history and in others has his feet firmly planted not only at the head of the Round Table but squarely in the middle of story. The Trickster of Indian legend not only has "logically" incompatible guises and adventures, he also, according to researchers, may have originally hailed from different locales.

As George MacDonald reminded us, all this would have been nonsense if it were not taking place in an imaginary spot on "the borders of Fairyland". These infinite adaptations coupled with the fact that myth, legend and fairy tale can sustain and survive them, indicate the amazing fertility of the tales themselves and their virtually indestructible form and shape.

IV An Explorer's Guide

In Touch Magic, Jane Yolen declares that "an understanding of, a grounding in, a familiarity with the old lores and wisdoms of the so-called dead worlds is . . . a basic developmental need".¹⁹ Yolen is an excellent guide for a tour of the territory of enchantment. After following in her footsteps through Touch Magic we can never return to the isolated and insulated grade nine

19. Yolen, p. 15.

course in Mythology. It was too little, too late. It had high hopes, but unless the students had much previous exposure to the genre at home or in libraries it was almost doomed to failure.

Now we find that, as Northrop Frye said of the King James Version of The Bible, myth, legend and fairy tale "should be taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind, where everything that comes along later can settle on it".²⁰

Myth, legend and fairy tale can, as Yolen's book emphasizes, provide first of all a "landscape of allusion". This is perhaps the crudest of the apologies for myth, legend and fairy tale as basics in our contemporary curriculum, but an essential one nonetheless.

It is simply impossible to read current literature or decipher popular advertising without intimate familiarity with the dialect of the tribe and this dialect, of course, is based upon our ancient tales. Who was the mighty Hercules before his dislocated form flashed upon our television screens? Who were Mary and Martha and why have contemporary feminists found them such apt examples of certain kinds of roles imposed upon womankind? Why is the beloved disciple a possible entry for homosexuals in their need to find identity in the holy writ of Western culture? Doubting Thomases and irresistible Helens surround us and we desperately need names for them if we are to understand them and their impotence or power.

Since the English or Language Arts programme eventually expands to include the total verbal experience of the student, it is not only for the purposes of understanding poets from Blake to Ted Hughes or novelists from Dickens to Timothy Findley that students need familiarity with literary code.

Sylvia Fraser's novel, The Candy Factory, includes a scene in which a secretary called Eve throws her applecore in the nearest waste basket; Judith Finlayson, writing about feminism in the Globe, needs Pandora's box to make her point; Linus Pauling

20. N. Frye, The Educated Imagination (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1963), p. 46.

(of Vitamin C fame) writing in the daily paper in his more recent capacity as a scientist for peace refers not only to Armageddon, but is himself referred to as a Cassandra. When Indian actor Will Sampson criticized what he considered an inaccurate telefilm about his people, the reviewer in MacLean's could not resist the caption, "Sampson takes on the Philistines".

In the past year I have encouraged several classes to bring me clippings from popular magazines and newspapers and have found that they delight in turning up with articles which allude to Pharaoh, Pilate and Adonis. They find quite illuminating the sexual exploits of Apollo, the sensual influence of Aphrodite, and the lure of Calypso in such apparently diverse publications as Playboy, Time, Homemakers, and even The Sun, depending on the reading materials in their milieu and the proclivities of their families and friends. It is perhaps a chastening and deflating lesson to learn that one's own generation has not invented sex and that love as well as lust existed outside wedlock before our present teenagers were dreamed of. Lancelot and Guinevere are surely helpful here. The generation gap, so-called, may be lessened, and the decrease in ignorance and arrogance which often ensues can be nothing but salutary.

What Yolen has called the landscape of allusion is of course as essential for visual art and music education as it is for literature. Alas, with our emphasis on skill and performance, many a competent grade nine flutist has never heard of Pan and many a sweet-voiced school choir singer knows not whereof she sings when she sings of Tristan and Isolde. Similarly, the student adept with oils and at the kiln may have no idea of the nymphs, satyrs, madonnas, and demons that his skill has the power to invoke. Closely related to the landscape of allusion is the familiarity young people gain concerning the shape of stories. Literature is made out of other literature or as Yolen puts it, "stories lean on stories, art on art" and the form of the tale is as important to literature as the form of the sonata or fugue is to music.

Yolen sees the second function of myth, legend and fairy tale as providing a way of "looking at another culture from the

inside out".²¹ In other words, we do not only go back to our cultural roots by connecting with our tales, we also become "familiar with the pantheon of Greek gods, who toy with human lives as carelessly as children at play". This brings the Greek world view into focus. "If a child learns about the range of Norse godlings who wait for heroic companions to feast with them at Valhalla, then the Viking's emphasis on battle derring-do makes more sense".²² The group of stories that hang together to form a mythology makes it clear that anyone stuck within the confines of his own time and space cannot possibly see or experience even it. As Joseph Campbell points out "humans have always had a long backwards reach".

Studying the mythologies of Greece and the Bible helps us to see the perverted myths of contemporary advertising and to have some power over them. Getting away from it all and beating our path to what is probably a less and less rustic cottage in the North is not hard to see as a contemporary distortion of the golden longing within the human breast ever-and-always to get back to the garden and to recapture that lost paradise. In a recent and witty article in The Atlantic, Garrison Keillor indicates several new ways of interpreting old tales, and they shed great light upon modern advertising. (Last names are omitted to protect the identity of the characters). Snow explains:

In trying to come to terms with myself, I've had to come to terms with my stepmother and her envy of my beauty, which made our relationship so destructive. She was a victim of the male attitude that prizes youth over maturity when it comes to women. Men can't dominate the mature woman, so they equate youth with beauty. In fact, she was beautiful, but the mirror (which, of course, reflected that male attitude) presented her²³ with a poor self-image and turned her against me.

21. Yolen, p. 16.

22. Yolen, p. 16.

23. G. Keillor, "My Stepmother Myself", The Atlantic (March 1982), pp. 77-9.

When people are terrified by age and the loss of a narrow and specific form of sexuality, myth and fairy tale can help in various ways. First, as in this retelling of the Snow White story, we see that the beautiful maiden and the old crone have always been with us, and as archetypes--not stereotypes. Even without the help of Robert Graves, however difficult he is to resist in this context, we can see that the ancient tales are full to the brim with insight concerning where real beauty resides. Several valuable new anthologies of stories where females have more important attributes than physical allurements and do not sit mooning that "someday my prince will come" are now available.²⁴ These tales are drawn from all cultures and are all retrieved from bygone times: they have simply been told, written, loved long since and lost awhile. Their recovery reveals again the discrepancy between appearance and reality. These old tales rediscovered and shared are helping immensely to quench an ageless thirst. Tatterhood, for example, a young woman of action riding on goats, or sailing ships herself, has what the social scientists today would call, I suppose, "a relationship of mutuality". Told as the good yarn it is, the ideas are incarnate and we can dispense with the jargon. This is how the tale concludes and a happy ending it is indeed.

At last Tatterhood said, "Aren't you going to ask me why I wear these ragged clothes?"

"No", said the prince. "It's clear you wear them because you choose to, and when you want to change them, you will."

At that, Tatterhood's ragged cloak disappeared, and she was clad in a velvet green mantle and kirtle.

But the Prince just smiled and said, "The colour

24. Such anthologies include E. Phelps, The Maid of the North (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981); A. Lurie, Clever Gretchen and Other Forgotten Folktales (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1980); and T. MacCarty, The Skull in the Snow and Other Folktales (New York: Delacorte Press, 1981).

becomes you very well."

When the castle loomed up ahead, Tatterhood said to him, "And will you not ask to see my face beneath the streaks of soot?"

"That, too, shall be as you choose."

As they rode through the castle gates, Tatterhood touched the rowan wand to her face, and the soot streaks disappeared. And whether her face now was lovely or plain we shall never know, because it didn't matter in the least to the prince's brother or to Tatterhood.

But this I can tell you: the feast at the castle was a merry one, with the games, and the singing, and the dancing lasting for many days.²⁵

Yolen, having remarked the "landscape of allusion" and the knowledge of ancestral cultures provided by making myth, legend and fairy tale new in every age, proceeds undaunted to the more touchy, more controversial, less strictly rational and, some would argue, most important functions of myth and tale. The third function is more elusive and complex than the first two. Yolen quotes Albert Lavin: "Myth conceived of as symbolic form . . . [is] a way of organizing the human response to reality."²⁶

The fourth function of myth, legend and fairy tale which Yolen identifies is more closely linked to language in general and metaphor in particular. She says that "the great archetypal stories provide a framework or model for an individual's belief system". She stresses the importance of the symbolic, metaphoric language which is then "honed by centuries of tongue-polishing to a crystalline perfection".²⁷ The symbolic language is something that a young child seems to understand almost viscerally; metaphoric speech is the child's own speech. We may know that indeed our sun neither rises nor sets, yet sunrise and sunset are so much part of our human metaphorical system, that oddly enough

25. E. Phelps, Tatterhood and Other Tales (New York: The Feminist Press, 1978), p. 6.

26. Yolen, p. 17.

27. Yolen, p. 18.

television earnestly informs us in print and sound at precisely what time these events which do not occur can be expected to take place. Even in our greatest skepticism and cynicism we seem determined to keep trying to turn our strange environment into a home:

True myth will always serve as an inexhaustible source of intellectual speculation, religious joy, ethical inquiry, and artistic renewal. The real mystery is not destroyed by reason. The fake one is. You look at it and it vanishes. You look at the Blond Hero--really look--and he turns into a gerbil. But you look at Apollo, and he looks back at you . . . The poet Rilke looked at a statue of Apollo and Apollo spoke to him. "You must change your life", he said.

When the genuine myth rises into consciousness, that is always its message. You must change your life.²⁸

This fourth function remains a risky one and perhaps the one most amenable to distortion. Nevertheless, our exploration would therefore be incomplete without it.

After painting a terrifying picture of children and, by implication, of the race itself deprived of mythology, art and language and therefore unable to generalize or interpret experience, Yolen concludes with a more encouraging statement:

A child conversant with the old tales accepts them with an ease born of familiarity, fitting them into his own scheme of things, endowing them with new meaning. That old fossil, those old bones, walk again, and sing and dance and speak with a new tongue.²⁹

V Some Suggestions for Using Enchantment

A) The Pros and Cons of Picture Book and Film

The problems inherent in using innocent-looking and often exquisitely beautiful picture books may not be

28. LeGuin, p. 77.

29. Yolen, p. 20.

immediately apparent. Since these looks appeal to us we are not likely to exercise caution in their use. Nevertheless, the picture book can be prescriptive as well as descriptive and the child's first encounter with any myth, legend or fairy tale is better told by the carefully rehearsed teacher with an occasional assist from a professional story-teller or simply read with respect from unadorned print. Thus no lid or limit is put on the imagination during this initial encounter. When the child sees picture books, it is wise to present at least two illustrators of the same tale.

I often suggest "blowing" the book budget for primary and junior grades on a dozen picture books of the same tale. Possessing at least two different visual interpretations safeguards the child's own initial imaginings. If there is only one pictorial version available, and it held in the hand of that all-knowing teacher, it must be "right" and my glorious pictures-in-my-head must be "wrong". If there are two renderings to view, then why not three? Why not mine as well? Why not, indeed?

With all our writing about, and wrestling with, reader response theory, we have been sluggish in examining the response to the visual impact of the illustrated tale. Do our first impressions simply get stuck in our imaginations? Hearing--not seeing--is surely the ideal way to enter-the-tale unencumbered and free to see and feel what is there.

Film is, of course, different in many ways. It has no responsibility to be "true to the story". It is free to create something else instead. But what film-makers do buy when they buy rights, as McLuhan pointed out, is the title.

Now most titles of myth, legend and fairy tale are free for the asking but I would, all things being equal, just as soon let a child form her or his own images of Moses before being assaulted by the extravaganza of The Ten Commandments. Even with a perceptive celluloid version such as, for example, The Loon's Necklace, I would prefer the experience of print to precede that of picture and, if at all possible, the human voice reaching human ears to come first of all.

B) The Racist Tale Reconsidered

Perhaps because of our own mental sets or even because of authorial intention, racism may appear in legend or folktale. Rather than stripping books from the shelf or providing an index of tales to avoid, consider telling or reading the tale to a small group or the whole class and discussing the aspects which concern you. Nowhere is the skill of the teacher more important than when it comes to seeing a tale in its own time, which may be a long time ago and far away indeed and in our own time as well. Sometimes a legend with racist undertones or overtones may help us understand and thus outgrow an unexamined prejudice.

C) Expanding the Boundaries of Legends

One area of study which has become popular in Ontario schools is that of the legend and lore of native peoples. Research is being conducted and collections feverishly compiled. Sometimes secondary school students believe that "legend" is synonymous with "native people's legends" and it is important both in the interest of the stories of native people and for our students' own perception that they be seen as very special to us, but as part of the body of legends-at-large.

It is of course a fulfilling activity to use the legends of the "heritage" countries represented in any classroom. And a final plea for the Arthurian tales. While The Boys' King Arthur is an unfortunate title, the tales themselves make jolly good reading and are necessary for what Yolen calls the "landscape of allusion" as well as what John Hirsch Jr. refers to as "cultural literacy".

D) Sexism Laid Bare - and Low

Sexism in myth, legend and fairy tale has been dealt with at length, but a final reminder is perhaps in order. There are many collections of ancient lore rediscovered in which strong females prevail and prosper; several were suggested earlier. If there is a balance to redress, these books are an immense help and there is an authentic ring

about them not to be found in much of the recently-revised material.

In case the dire warnings of the danger to female self-esteem inherent in myth, legend and fairy tales have any validity, it may be as well in the meantime to strike a balance between tales portraying strong female characters and those portraying strong males. It should be remembered 'however' that there is infinitely more that is sexist in life than in art for present-day children and if one is alert to danger, it is wise to be sure where it is to be found.

E) Activities: Glimpses into the Obvious

I resist providing a list of activities which can be used in conjunction with the telling and reading of myth, legend and fairy tale, but their strong and suggestive visual qualities combined with an easily-identifiable and powerful story line make these naturals for drama, visual art and music, or a combination of the three. For the "researchers" in the class of intermediate or senior students the tracing of a mythological character through the arts of the ages and into contemporary times is a splendid idea. If it takes I have found that students will work much harder and longer on such a project than I should ever have presumed to suggest. Writing from a minor character's point of view, up-dating the tale, writing scripts for performance, writing or taping in pairs with partners taking opposite points of view--these are just a few of the possible ways of actively engaging children in reading and writing about myth, legend and fairytale.

F) Making Connections

Children detect the connections between tales even without adult intervention. When a similarity is cited, discoveries seem to erupt everywhere and it is the wise teacher who encourages making connections without being outlandishly far-fetched.

It is interesting to note that, of all the arts, myth and fairy tale connect most easily between east and west and between old and young. The territory can never really be defined or defended. It is the home of the imagination where for a few precious moments we escape the confines of space and the tyranny of time. Providing young people with keys to what C. S. Lewis calls "other worlds" is no mean accomplishment.

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Epilogue to Chapter Two: Telling Stories

The only legitimate way to end this section is to talk about how stories are essential to being human. They sensitize readers and/or listeners to the possibilities of how other people think and feel, and they give order and value to the incoherence of everyday events.

It is a curious thing, but when a really powerful storyteller tells a story, a picture becomes visible in front of your eyes. You can see the events in action, even though you remain conscious of the teller speaking the words. It doesn't happen all the time, but it does tend to happen more often than not if you have learned how to listen to stories.

There is an inverse effect too. When you look at pictures or sculptures, you begin to think in the language of story, something akin to the symbolic language of dreams and folk/fairy tales. Joseph Campbell calls it "the picture language of the soul".

Make special time to tell stories in class. The stories will speak for themselves. Besides the fact that the whole exercise should give a great deal of pleasure to all of you, the children in your class will have a chance to develop a latent skill. They will learn how to listen. That will always be useful for them.

What follows are some practical suggestions on information about stories and storytelling that is available:

If you want further information on what stories are: read Elizabeth Cook, The Ordinary and the Fabulous; Tolkien's essay, "Tree and Leaf"; or "Myth and Education" by Ted Hughes. Cook gives a good breakdown of the differences between myth, folktale, fairytale and legend, and she also lists places to look for stories to tell. Tolkien describes basic, underlying patterns that shape folktales and fairytales. Ted Hughes talks about the way children enter a story, find their place, and hold open a space between literature and life.

If you want to find out about the practice of storytelling: read Eileen Colwell. She tells stories about storytelling.

Other than that, there is only one suggestion. Read stories. When you find one you like, tell it. There is no need to worry about being a professional storyteller. We all tell stories every time we speak. There are, however, a few tricks you might keep in reserve. Know the content of the story before you start, but don't memorize it. The rhythms of your own speech patterns will carry the sense. Try to visualize the events of the story and then simply tell what you see; but if it makes you more comfortable, keep the story in hand, then read parts and tell parts at first.

If you are interested in working with the stories you tell, here are some general suggestions. Think about the kind of story that would be of most interest to you and to the children in your class. Contemporary fairytales? Stories about superman/woman-type heroes? Or about Jack-the-Giant killer tricksters? Stories about knights-in-armour? Are there West Indian children in your class? Why not tell some Ananse stories? Are there Chinese children? Some Chinese folktales? Irish? Irish fairytales. As it says in The Formative Years reading can be developed by "drawing upon the personal experiences and language" of the students.

Johan Aitken has a wonderful idea for showing how traditional stories are connected with contemporary life. She has her students bring in popular references (from newspapers, advertising copy, magazines and the like) to classical, Biblical, legendary and mythical scenes and characters.

It might be interesting to have students bring in a version of a familiar tale as told to them by someone from an "old country" (any old country will do). Or how the same story, say Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood, appears in ancient folktales and in contemporary ones. You might want to compare several different illustrated versions of one story, so that the children can see the variety of pictures that stories bring to people's minds.

Chapter 2: Stories are About Being Human

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Prologue to Chapter Three

Who are Stories For? Everyone

Our Own Words and the Words of Others
David Booth and
Jo Phenix

Cross-Age Tutoring in Writing
Beverley Allinson

Six Magic Words
Brenda Protheroe

One of the habits acquired over the years is slotting stories into age-defined or grade-defined categories of children. Some books, we say, are suitable for beginning readers, others for ten-year olds, or for young adults. The categories are familiar. But stories do not have to be read like that. As C. S. Lewis says: "no book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty".

The articles in this section treat stories as more than just ways of defining reading levels of children in a class. Stories are composed out of the love, attention and work that authors put into making them. As teachers, we can make new readers conscious of the care that goes into thinking about a story and into writing it. It is knowledge of the respect with which authors treat their work and knowledge of the conventions, structures and techniques of stories that turn new readers into seasoned readers--and writers.

The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing is the subject of "Our Own Words and the Words of Others" (in two parts, the second part is in chapter seven) by David Booth. The body of this article (a conversation between Booth and a teacher, Jo Phenix) is about how the children she deals with every day learn to read stories by writing, and vice versa. The children find patterns in stories, then make stories that use the patterns. The advice in The Formative Years to "experiment with words, word patterns, and idioms" is used in a vital rather than a static way. The clear beauty of the following example of a cumulative story that the children wrote is so arresting that a little will be

cited here: "One thundering Thursday morning, while on my way to school, I saw four shivering geese flying away, three wet puddles freezing, two yellow leaves falling, one cold squirrel gathering nuts near the little path through the woods". You can read the rest of it in the article.

Beverley Allinson and Brenda Protheroe write about how stories can be set free from age-defined and grade-defined strait jackets. Both women write personal accounts of their in-class experiences of older children sharing stories with younger ones. Their articles radiate the success of their projects and demonstrate what taking stories seriously means. Beverley Allinson, a writer with access to a grade 7/8 class, had the students read stories with K/1 children, then write stories for them. The two classes operated on a buddy system, each older child responsible for a younger one. Both groups thrived. The older ones learned what kinds of stories caught and kept the attention of their charges, so they acquired first-hand knowledge of the narrative conventions of literature--the art of selection, for example. The efforts of the older children were rewarded by the improved literacy of their young partners. In treating reading and writing as something important, as something of tangible value, both older and younger children developed their skills and pleasure in reading.

Brenda Protheroe begins her article with a wonderful image of the hulking male grade 13 students in her class reading intently about the fate of The Iron Man (by Ted Hughes). She had started to read the story aloud in class, but did not have time to finish it before the end of term. Her story testifies to the power of The Iron Man as a story for adults and children alike, and to her own sensitivity and ability to engage her students. Like the 7/8 class, Protheroe's grade 13 class did a unit on children's literature. The students both read to and wrote for younger children. The value of the interaction was immediately apparent. Protheroe's students learned first hand how to make stories and feel the pride of creation. The little ones loved the attention of having stories written just for them. Grade thirteen students are adults, for all intents and purposes. The children's literature unit reminded them about the importance of stories in

their own lives. They also caught a glimpse of the roles of stories in the upcoming generation of readers.

What comes through dramatically in all three articles is how stories transcend age, ability and culture. Stories are for everyone.

OUR OWN WORDS AND THE WORDS OF OTHERS

PART ONE

David Booth

Working with both children and the books written for them is a delicate balance; on one hand, the teacher must recognize the needs and interests of the young people, while at the same time encouraging and persuading them to want to read and to listen to selections that may lead them to new and significant understandings, that may at first appear remote or even alien to their lives at this particular moment in time and space. The children must constantly go back and forth between the story and their own responses, translating the experiences of the story into the context of their own lives. It is this negotiation of meaning between the world of the child and the book that forms the basis of reading, and it is the potential power of this art form called children's literature that excites us as teachers, as we attempt to alter perceptions, widen horizons, challenge biases and develop sensitive and compassionate individuals.

Helping children to see beyond themselves to better understand their own lives means setting up situations where their own words and ideas have worth, so that they have the security and the competence to risk both examining these new literary worlds, and expressing their thoughts and feelings about the subsequent revelations, and, if we are lucky, adapting, absorbing and reflecting upon the new learning.

The children must make the poems, the stories, the articles and the pictures their own, by responding to the content of the selection from their own background, by using the underlying linguistic pattern as a beginning point for their own writing and by adopting special words for their own use. They will grow to appreciate literature and language as they develop an esthetic awareness from belonging to the literature, from using every aspect of the story or the poem in their own lives. This ownership of the literature is the key to building truly literate people, as the children blend the ideas and words and patterns of authors they have read and heard with their own thoughts and

language, until they take possession and can explore and communicate their new personal meanings.

This ability to use children's literature in the daily programmes of children in school is exemplified by an Ontario teacher, Jo Phenix, who teaches grade one. The following interview demonstrates the strategies that help children become a part of what they read, hear and view, and offers many fine strategies for incorporating literature into the curriculum.

OUR OWN WORDS

D.B. Literature in the Primary Program. How do you have the children begin creating their own literature?

J.P. Right at the beginning it's just a one word label, and then a sentence on each page. For example, in Colleen's book on Halloween, each page has a single picture: "pumpkin", "ghost", "bat", "witch".

Janet uses the same kind of repeated pattern,

'I like hearts on all kinds of things. I like hearts on swing sets. I like them on cars. I like hearts on pictures. I like hearts on clowns. I like hearts on games'.

This one is a bit more complex, Angie's I was Walking at the Forest.

'I was walking at the forest, I saw the sun. He said hello, and my friend said, "Hello, Mr. Sun," and the sun said hello back to us. I was walking at the forest. I saw trees. They said hello to me. I was happy. I said, "Did you say something"? They said, "Yes". Then I woke up with my sister. We went to the forest, I saw flowers. The flowers said hello to me, I said hello back to them. One day I woke up. I went to the forest. I went by myself. Then my friend came. I went to the forest. The sky said hello to me. I said hello back to him!

D.B. I hear in the writing of the children all kinds of literary and linguistic structures that have come from the literature they have read and heard. Is that a big part of your classroom?

J.P. It is. Quite a lot of the group writing that's done is part of the literature where the children read and internalize the pattern and then use the pattern in their own writing.

D.B. How do you stop this from being simply restructuring at a simple level?

J.P. By doing brainstorming about different ideas, different settings, different concepts for the pattern, by collecting words and ideas and then by working as a group to develop new ideas around the same pattern.

D.B. And how do these groups share their stories when they are completed?

J.P. They share them, first of all, by publishing them, working together as a group to organize the story and illustrate it and do the publishing, and then we have a story circle where the groups take turns to read aloud their stories.

D.B. The sensory awareness in Over the Rainbow was lovely. I noticed, for example, when they said "In the Pond", that it's a reflection of the rainbow in the water. The children seem to have the underlying rhythmical structure in every line that they use on every page.

D.B. So the pattern is the same but the concept is different.

J.P. Right.
This one came from a poem called 'Over There' and this is part of the original.

Over the rice fields, over the
kites, over the top of the northern
lights. Over the ice fields, over
the snow, right to the ends of the
earth we'll go.

With this one the children worked in small groups, so the pattern books were written by a group of four children working

together, and they chose the bottom of the ocean.

Over the rocks, under the fish,
beside a whale, through the
seaweeds, near the starfish, around
an octopus, on top of the sand,
across a submarine, past some
shells, on top of the seal, beside
an otter, at the end of a shark,
right to the bottom of the ocean
we'll go.

And the next group chose Over the Rainbow
Under the sun, on top of a house,
through the clouds, under the
clouds, behind some, across the
jet, over a fence, around the
children, in the pond, on the
driveway, past all the bright
colours, near a pot of gold, right
to the end of the rainbow we'll go.

D.B. How important are the visuals the children have created?

J.P. It's important. It's interesting that when they do their individual stories, some of the children illustrate before they write, some of them illustrate after they write.

D.B. And how about when a group plans?

J.P. Again, it works both ways, sometimes the words come first, sometimes the pictures come first. If it's a pattern that they are using, usually the words come first. If it's an idea, very often the pictures will come first.

D.B. How do you handle such things as the spelling?

J.P. The children use inventive spelling as they write, so they get their ideas down on the paper. Most of the children right from the start put letters down on paper, and for the ones that couldn't write enough letters for the work to be readable, I would transcribe when they read the story to me.

D.B. Is the writing in the group books your printing?

J.P. Sometimes it is, sometimes not. I try to have the finished product coming out as

well as possible, so when the children can't do it, I do it for them.

D.B. I notice that their word choice is definitely no single, monosyllabic "basal reader" style.

J.P. It isn't. It's their own language, or it's the language from the literature.

D.B. Do you have an example of the beginning stages where their "child talk" narrative is simply encoded and written down?

J.P. This one I Was Playing, by Angie, as she writes,

I was playing outside in the snow with my brother. I went outside to play with my brother, then we went back inside and it was still snowing. Then we put back our snowpants and we got down in the snow and we made a snowman. I did it with my brother.

D.B. But even that has a definite beginning, middle and end, doesn't it? She has a sense of narrative about it.

J.P. Yes. I have one here by Shannon, the champion of the longest story. She even called it The Story That Never Ends, because in conferences we talked about this structure.

One day I was reading a book and it was nearly supper time. My Mom called me for supper. After my supper my Mom said, "Go and get your PJ's and then come downstairs and read your book and then go to bed". I picked flowers while my Mom was getting the breakfast for my Dad and my brother, and my Mom and I picked the flowers for Ryan and Dad and Mom. And then I gave the flowers to them. They were my brother and my Dad and my Mom. And then my brother and me and my Dad watched TV and my Mom was getting the lunch ready. Then my Mom called us for lunch and then we went shopping and then we came back and then Dad and me and my brother and my Mom was getting supper ready and she called us for supper and

she told us to get our PJ's on and go to bed.

And it goes on for several more days like that.

D.B. When they are reading aloud their own stories and their group stories, do they read with meaning and read by chunking the words into groups?

J.P. They do. When they read their own stories, that's the only way they can read. They read them back the way they wrote them.

D.B. What connection do you see from reading their own stories to reading stories written by authors?

J.P. I think they learn to read for meaning by reading their own stories, because they are used to putting meaning in these stories. They expect to find meaning in a story; they expect it to make sense.

D.B. When do you see the transition happening from reading our own writing to reading the words of others?

J.P. I think they go side by side. I don't know whether there'd be a stage of moving from one to the other. The two seem to grow together constantly.

D.B. Then all the time you are reading aloud and helping them build up that deposit of literary and linguistic structures?

J.P. Right. From stories that they hear, you then hear the patterns and the ideas used in their writing.

D.B. Let's take a look at some of the patterns that emerge in their writing. Do you have a counting book?

J.P. This is a counting one, a pattern from one that the children heard, 'Cinnamon Bun'.

Their own ideas for the counting rhyme were put down on chart paper and they used this as reading material for their chanting.

D.B. The oral came before the writing then?

J.P. Right. And then the children did the illustrations for the story and it was

published in a book, One, One, Elephants Come.

One, one, elephants come, two, two, kangaroo, three, three, honeybee, four, four, lions roar, five, five sea lions dive, six, six, baby chicks, seven, seven, a bad cold, eight, eight, monkeys wait, nine, nine, porcupine, ten, ten, start again'.

D.B. Where do they get those wonderful rhyming words?

J.P. It was brainstorming: "just what can we find that rhymes with each word?"

D.B. On the theme of animals?

J.P. There was a lot of discussion on themes, several themes were tried, but some things didn't work because they just couldn't find the right words.

D.B. How much of the children is in the layout of the lines, for example, the numbers in black, and the rhyming words in red?

J.P. That's my idea to make it easy for them to read. When I did the original chart I did it this way because with chart paper it's easier to read if alternate lines are different colours. Also it's easy to do a choral response that way because you can take either the red ones or the black ones.

D.B. So the graphic input that you have in all of your books is equally important in the reading aspect as well?

J.P. Yes, it is. For example, how much goes on a page and the size of the print.

D.B. That's the care artists take in putting out children's books and why it's equally important when they write their own work, that they be able to read it easily.

J.P. This is a pattern from A as in Apple Pie. And this again was done by a group of children. The original brainstorming was done as a group and the children then chose pages to illustrate.

A as in airplane, B built it, C cleaned it, D dusted it, E entered

it, F flew it, G gassed it up, H heard it take off, I iced up the wings, J just landed it, K kept the key, L looped the loop, M made the engine, N named it, O opened the door, P piloted it, Q quit the job, R rode in it, S stopped it, T towed it, U unfastened the seatbelt, V vacuumed it, W watched the movie, X exited, Y yawned on it, Z zoomed into the air.

D.B. It reinforces the fact that the language they are using is quality language, not made-up language simply used for learning to read and write. When we read to children we want to read only the finest and the best, whether it's the word or the pattern.

J.P. An interesting thing about the alphabet book is that the children look at a lot of their ABC books as they are doing this, and they find out that a lot of the patterns are in the letters. For example, they don't know many words with q, so it was interesting to make a list of those words and then decide which ones they could use in the story, and they started looking in other ABC books to find out the words they used for X and which letters were more difficult.

This one is a pattern from Q is for Duck. It didn't take the children long to catch on to the pattern of that one.

'A is for trampoline. Why?
Because the trampoline has
acrobats'.

D.B. The answers are written upside down.

J.P. It's interesting to see, too, which children bother to turn the page and which ones just go ahead and read it upside down.

'B is for house. Why? Because a
house is
built'.

'C is for baby. Why? Because
the baby
cries'.

'D is for fire. Why? Because a
 dragon
 breathes
 fires'.

'E is for volcano. Why? Because a
 volcano
 erupts'.

D.B. They are putting much more symbolic thought
 in this one, aren't they? They are really
 fooling with the language, working with the
 concept, and building a whole new pattern.

J.P. In this one, the children made a list first
 of all the things they do in the snow and
 then did the illustrations for them. Then,
 working as a group, the illustrations were
 sequenced and the story was dictated, then
 cut and pasted together. It starts in the
 morning.

'One day I woke up, I looked out of
the window. It was snowing. I put
my clothes on, I put my shirt and
my sweater and my leg warmers and
my pants on'.

This particular one is illustrated with cut
and paste collage as a model of the
Ezra Jack Keats book, A Snowy Day.

I put on my snowpants, my boots, my
mittens, my coat, my hat, my
earmuffs and my scarf. I was ready
to go. Then I picked up my friend,
she came outdoors. We rolled a big
snowball.

(That's a direct copy from the
John Burningham story. They liked that
idea.)

'We made a snowman with buttons out
of raisins, a carrot nose and a
licorice mouth. We dressed him in
a scarf, mitts and a hat. We fed
the birds some bread, crackers,
popcorn and bird seed. We made
some angels in the snow. And dug
and dug and dug and made tunnels in
the snow. We went in to see what
it felt like. It felt freezing and
wet. We made an igloo. We made a
big pile of snow and dug out the
insides and crowded inside and
played. We saw bird tracks, dog

tracks, stick tracks. We made sculptures. The snow has to be hard. We took a sharp stick and carved it. We skated on the pond and I fell down. It felt cold and I bumped my head. My friend and I fell down together. I went down the hill with the sled with my friend, I held on to my friend. When we came home we saw the Christmas lights on the house. They shone on my face. I felt bright and happy as if it was almost Christmas. I took off my winter clothes. We had hot chocolate; it was hot and sweet and it smelled chocolaty. I liked the marshmallows, it made me feel happy. We warmed our hands in front of the flaming fire. We sang carols and watched Christmas specials. It was night. It was still snowing. My friend went home. I went to bed. I felt tired. I would dream about everything I did today. I hope it snows tomorrow'.

They ended the story the same way John Burningham did.

D.B. You have there a compendium of two styles rather than two syntactic patterns, don't you? They are beginning to apply the style of authorship to their own work.

Sometimes they use the syntactic pattern to build their own work on.

J.P. This one is a direct pattern. It's from 'The Ants Go Marching', by Bernie, and 'Fly Away Home'.

'The ants go marching, one by one,
up and out of the earth, zigging
and zagging in a long line. Where
are they marching, one by one? Do
they know? Do they know'?

Michelle took this pattern and decided to write a story about bears. She writes:

The bears go thumping one by one,
up a log, through the grass, up and
up in a long line. Where are they
thumping, one by one? Do they
know? Do they know?

Two by two the bears go thumping,
up a tree, down again, over a
stone, under a ladder, through the
flowers. Almost last comes Baby
Bear. Where are they thumping,
two by two? Do they know? Do they
know? Three by three the bears go
thumping, Baby Bear stops beside a
rock. Up he climbs, down again. A
caterpillar crawls away. Where are
they thumping, three by three? Do
they know? Do they know?

And a counting story:

One rainy Tuesday morning, while on
my way to school, I saw two
shivering geese flying away, one
wet puddle freezing, near the
little path through the woods. One
windy Wednesday morning, while on
my way to school, I saw three
shivering geese flying away, two
wet puddles freezing, one yellow
leaf falling, near the little path
through the woods. One thundering
Thursday morning, while on my way
to school, I saw four shivering
geese flying away, three wet
puddles freezing, two yellow leaves
falling, one cold squirrel
gathering nuts near the little path
through the woods. One foggy
Friday morning, while on my way to
school, I saw five shivering geese
flying away, four wet puddles
freezing, three yellow leaves
falling, two cold squirrels
gathering nuts, one chilly child
wearing a warm coat near the little
path through the woods. One snowy
Saturday morning, while on my way
to the synagogue, I saw six
shivering geese flying away, five
wet puddles freezing, four yellow
leaves falling, three cold
squirrels gathering nuts, two
chilly children wearing warm coats,
one soft snowflake swirling, near
the little path through the woods.
One freezing Sunday morning, while
on my way to the church, I saw
seven shivering geese flying away,
six wet puddles freezing, five
yellow leaves falling, four cold
squirrels gathering nuts, three
chilly children wearing warm coats,

two soft snowflakes swirling, one cheerful snowman grinning near the little path through the woods. One cloudy Monday morning, while on my way to school, I saw geese flying, puddles freezing, leaves falling, squirrels gathering, children wearing coats, snowflakes swirling, snowmen grinning. Why? It's winter.

D.B. There is a climax there as well. They have also used cultural patterns: days of the week and counting backwards.

J.P. A lot of interesting things went on during the writing of this one, too, because at first it was just a bare list of geese and puddles and leaves and squirrels, and the children, on a second draft, went back, and the children added some of the other words to that. It happened by chance that one of the children noticed the alliteration there, 'chilly children', and then they went back and started to change some of the other words to make that happen in other parts of the story, too.

D.B. Their word awareness came after the ideas, and they wanted to refine and edit their own ideas that way. And the sounds help, don't they?

J.P. Everything that is listed on the page is shown in the illustrations, so if it says 'six shivering geese' there are six shivering geese in the picture. So it really forced them to put the detail into the illustrations too.

D.B. Sometimes telling is a basic way for the child to start, isn't it?

J.P. It is, yes. The children like to hear the same stories over and over, and they memorize the story patterns. This is Andrea's story of The Beanstalk.

Once upon a time in a faraway land, there lived a princess and all around they were poor. One day there was a storm and the palace's window opened and the princess was gone. Then one day Mickey saw the cow between the beans. Mickey ran home. "I got one bean". "Beans, beans?" said Donald. "They're not

ordinary beans", said Mickey. Donald threw the beans out the window. That night the beans started to grow and grow and grow. The next morning Mickey woke up with a surprise. He called to Donald and Goofy. They climbed and climbed and climbed until they came to the top. And then they saw a big castle . . .

D.B. So in this story we have a Disney character appearing and she has the foundations of fairy tale, the qualities of fairy tale, the story grammar embedded in the writing.

J.P. She does. She really likes things like 'to grow and grow and grow, and they climbed and climbed and climbed . . .' She uses that a lot in her writing.

D.B. How does it end?

J.P. Then they found the princess. "How did you get there?" "A giant captured me", she said. "A giant", said Mickey. "Yes", she said. They all heard her. Then the giant made her sing a song and he fell asleep. They quietly took her. Then they were at the bottom. Mickey hurried, and the giant was dead, and they put the princess back in the castle and they lived happy ever after'.

J.P. Julie's story of Cinderella Monkey came as a result of a movie called Cinderella Penguin, a retelling of the Cinderella story.

Once upon a time there lived a monkey named Ella. She was very pretty. She had two stepsisters who were vain and ugly and mean, and a very, very mean stepmother. Ella lays the ashes, so they called her Cinderella. Every day they stuck a bucket of water and a mop in her hand. One day the doorbell rang and Cinderella said, "I'll get it". "A message!" "Let me see", cried the two stepsisters. And then Cinderella said, "Can I see?" "Sure, but you can't go. Only if you finish all your chores." "So what if I do finish all my chores today?" "We'll see about that. But before you do all your chores,

you have to tell Mom and fix my clothes." "Mine too."

D.B. How do you think they acquire this understanding of how a story functions?

J.P. By hearing a lot of stories and by reading a lot of stories, by reading stories many, many times by taking part right in the story and joining along, chanting with the story.

D.B. This one has moved to a literary form immediately.

J.P. Paris comes from a Greek family and his mother tells him the Greek stories, over and over again, and when Paris came to school, he knew them well. Paris will go for quite a long time without writing very much at all, or anything of much value. Then, when he is ready, he starts to write one of his stories, such as Hercules.

Once upon a time there was a boy called Hercules. One day Hercules was in his crib. Two poisonous snakes went there. Hercules strangled them with his hand. From that day Hercules was a hero of all making. Hercules grew up and went to school and learned many things. Most of all Hercules liked to help people. The people believed Hercules was a son of God, or God, because he was so strong. Goddess Hera was very jealous and made Hercules do something bad. When Hercules realized what he did, he prayed to God Apollo what he could do to purify himself. Hercules was commanded to do the twelve labours that were impossible for any other ordinary man.

D.B. And how old was Paris?

J.P. Paris was just seven.

D.B. Read us another one he's written.

J.P. This one is Prince of Troy and it took him a long time to write this one because he was a little embarrassed about his name.

D.B. Because his own name is in it?

J.P. Yes.

Once upon a time there was a queen and a king, and they had a baby called Paris. One day the queen had a bad dream. She dreamed that the city of Troy was going to be burned. They asked when it was going to be. The answer was that one day Prince Paris was going to burn the city of Troy. The king was very worried. He decided to send Paris away. A shepherd took Paris to his cottage. Slowly Paris grew up and helped the shepherd. One day at the Olympus there was a celebration.

All the gods and goddesses; they forgot to invite goddess Aris. She was very upset of that. She decided to spoil the party. Goddess Aris threw a golden apple into the celebration, it was marked for the fairest. All the goddesses wanted the apple. God Zeus decided that judgement should be by Paris, the shepherd's son, who was really prince of Troy. All the goddesses promised him power, but goddess Aphrodite offered him the fairest woman. Paris gave the apple to goddess Aphrodite.

D.B. Where do you think the child gets these amazing structures and vocabulary and formality of language?

J.P. Paris is an avid reader. He is a boy who likes to be by himself and any spare moment that he's got he goes out by himself and he reads. He reads constantly. So it's partly the old tradition in his family, a lot of storytelling in the family, and

D.B. This may be the best example of how our own words and the words of others combine in our own literary structures, in our own literary patterns.

J.P. It's interesting that the other children recognize this quality in Paris'S writing too. Paris has a lot of respect in the class as a writer. I'd like to read the end of this story. The story structure in here, the detail and the sequence in the

story is just phenomenal. He doesn't miss any parts of it. And he talks about Menelaus and the Trojan war and the wooden horse, and the story of Achilles, it's all in here, and he ends his story saying

Prince Paris fought until death for his country and his love.

Its army won the war by the clever scheme of the wooden horse. This is the end of the Trojan war and the most beautiful love of Paris and Helen.

D.B. This brings up another point that if they write about what they feel important and use the structure that touches them, then their writing will be more powerful than if I inflict one pattern or style on them.

J.P. No other children in the class could write this way, and it's interesting that in between these stories that Paris writes he'll spend maybe two or three weeks writing things of very little quality. This is something that's important to him, it matters, and he seems to put all his writing energy into this.

D.B. If the children are inundated with a format or genre so that they have a hundred folk tales, the story grammar becomes embedded right in their psyche. They have no difficulty using it.

What format do you have to help the children express their own intuitive emotional feelings and ideas and concerns?

J.P. I think the children do this best when it's something that does really concern them and that's something that you can't plan for. When they are ready to write something personal, they do.

D.B. But do you ever notice that what you've read triggers in the child his own emotional response?

J.P. It often does because the children often read stories together, in which case they'll talk to each other about the story, and if a story has been read in class, either read aloud by me or one of the other children, or read as a group, then they

will talk about the story and apply it to their own experience.

This is When I was Sick by Anita.

One day I was sick. My friend came over. She brought me some flowers to make me feel better. I said, "Thank you". She said, "You're welcome". Then my other friend came over too, and she gave me flowers. And I said, "Thank you", and I felt better from the flowers my friends brought. They knew that I would feel better. I was happy. I felt better and I was very surprised. When one of my friends just went home, my other friend was surprised too. My friend said, "Maybe it's because she catches your germ, because she catches all of her friends' germs. So I guess she doesn't want to get a cold". And she said, "I think I should go home too so I don't catch your cold". "But then who will play with me?" "Play with someone else that's sick too." Then my Mom gave me some hot chocolate and I felt better. But I had very much fun at home. I even had lunch in bed. I never knew that when you're sick it's still good fun.

D.B. She's taking her own experience and giving it literary format.

J.P. And she's putting some humour in there too.

D.B. Their use of dialogue, when do you notice that happening?

J.P. That often happens right from the start too. Sometimes they're not aware of it as dialogue, and it's just a thought stream.

D.B. And do you give them quotation marks?

J.P. That's something that they seem to learn very quickly, that when you talk about somebody talking on their page, they can recognize it, and I found they learn quotation marks very easily, and they like to use them. It's the first punctuation they usually learn. Once they've used it they use it forever afterwards. They never forget it.

D.B. What about if a group has an experience they want to write down?

J.P. This particular one came as a result of the book called Some Day by Charles, and the children had quite a long discussion about the things that they would really like some day. So this book is a collection of their ideas.

Some day I will go to my house and Edna will say, "Three cheers for Kim, the good, good girl". Some day my mother and father are going to say, "You can have your own treehouse". Some day I will go to my bedroom and see my brother clean my room. Some day I will see Michael Jackson in person. Some day I will go to the park and will say, "Want to be friends? We want to be your friends". Some day I will learn to swim. Some day I will come home and my brother will give me a present. Some day my mother and father are going to say, "Eat all the strawberries, won't you?" Some day I will go to school and Miss Phenix will say, "Don't do your jobs, Jason". Some day I will go to school and will say, "You're the best guy in school".

D.B. Those are full of emotional content, aren't they? Each one of those.

J.P. Yes, because the children had to be selective. They only had one idea to write.

D.B. That group thing forces them then also to be careful and considerate of what they use. What kind of aesthetic growth do you think they have after this kind of reading and writing combination? Are they better at choosing books, do they like books, are books part of their lives?

J.P. There comes a point where you see them choosing books because of the content. Right at the beginning they've had to choose books that either have good pictures or the ones they think are easy to read. But suddenly they choose books because they are interested in the content, in what's in the book. And I think that's the breakthrough for them in reading.

- D.B. Do they ever go after particular authors?
- J.P. Yes, they do. In fact, we used to have an author of the week, and we have author collections. Arnold Lobel was a favourite, A. A. Milne for a while, John Burningham at present. You find the style of the author coming through in their writing, too.
- D.B. Do you think that this kind of literature approach has any affect on their development as humans? Do they become better people?
- J.P. I think they do, because with the reading and their writing and the sharing of their own writing they become aware of audience, they become aware of what other people are thinking about things, and aware of different points of view. They sometimes start off being very critical of each other and they become sensitive to the kind of things you say to somebody about writing, and about their idea. It's hard for little children to accept other people's ideas and to listen when other people talk, and I think this kind of experience in sharing helps them.
- D.B. Would you say this kind of embedded language play and usage remains with them at the school?
- J.P. I think it does, yes. I think it does because you see it in their writing, you see it in the games they play, you see the patterns going out on the playground and the patterns from their games coming back into the classroom.

The imaginative writing produced by the children in Jo Phenix's class testifies to her skill as a teacher. She takes them beyond straight word recognition. Texts have meaning. She encourages the children to imagine, to picture what the words say, and she encourages them to seek and play with the patterns inherent in the language. The children in Jo Phenix's class are lucky. They are actively engaged in the stories they read and in the ones they write--engaged in their "own words" and in the "words of others".

CROSS-AGE TUTORING IN WRITING

Beverley Allinson

Introduction

The course described has been developed over a three-year period, largely in inner-city schools. It is designed to increase the communication skills of adolescents by partnering them with kindergarten/grade 1 children in co-operative activities related to storytelling.

In one school, six grade 7 students volunteered to "work with small children and make up stories". In the other, twelve grade 7/8 students were chosen from two classes by their homeroom teachers. Three K/1 teachers and their students participated.

The resulting groups represented children with a wide range of ability and language competence, and with a variety of ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds.

In both schools, a particular room became the workshop space; an open-area resource centre in one instance, a conventional classroom in the other. Senior students were encouraged to choose a private space for their writing and this soon became the accepted practice. They would regroup in the central area when they were done, to share their writing if they chose to. When the primary children came to the workshops this pattern of movement in and out of the larger group easily included them. By that time the senior students modelled confidently and purposefully.

Students were encouraged to respond to the aptness and truth of the emotional content, to consider what the writer knew to be true of young children.

The Course

Two simultaneous workshops took place during January/February 1983. The course consisted of ten consecutive half-day sessions and developed as follows:

Phase 1: Themes and Responses

Intensive storybook reading. Writing in response to emerging themes.

Phase 2: Cross-age Tutoring

Visits to primary classrooms. Observation. Interaction.
Primary children attend workshops. Partnering.

Phase 3. Storywriting

Senior students planned and drafted stories for primary children.

Themes and Responses

Central to the programme is a collection of storybooks that young children enjoy. It includes some titles that have been favoured by generations of readers, though most are contemporary. The selection includes resourceful female characters, male characters who express their feelings, and is as representative of the ethnic makeup of Metro schools as present publications allow. A large percentage of the stories have Canadian authors.

Each title, directly or obliquely, relates to the young reader's interest, concerns and experience. The stories are about growing up, about family life, about friendship and conflict, fear and achievement. They feature characters who celebrate triumphs, who overcome feelings of anger or jealousy or frustrations with adults who don't understand. Many of the stories make the children laugh out loud, sometimes in response to the humour in an event or situation, more often in delighted recognition of a childhood truth.

The senior students experienced these stories in a number of ways. They were read to, they sampled for themselves, they read to one another, they read aloud to the group. Listening to stories was favoured. Like their younger counterparts, the senior students were often spellbound by a well-told story. The occasional appearance of one they loved to hear when young prompted excited recollections. Those who had forgotten, or for whom the theme had not then resonated, and those who heard the story for the first time, were soon involved in the spirited discussion that followed such a reading.

Each student was given a particular title to peruse and asked to consider the factors that made the story a popular one. They then chose to read the story to the group or to present a

report. The ensuing discussion gradually led to a shared understanding of the authors' intent and methods. Students were encouraged to respond to the aptness and truth of the emotional content, to consider what the writer knew to be true of young children.

Particularities of style, structure, rhyme, rhythm, repetition were noted as the sample grew and stories could be compared and contrasted. In time, students discovered that certain themes reappeared and that writers explored them in a variety of ways. Later, when they had the opportunity to experiment with different forms and styles in their own storywriting, the collection invariably influenced their writing. Throughout this process, the collection grew steadily until there were 40 or so titles in circulation. Eventually, the students selected titles they would share with a young partner, and wrote about their choice.

Noisy Nora

I think children would like this book because it is about a girl who wanted attention from her parents and she tried to get it by being noisy. Most children make a lot of noise so they would like this story. They would also like the pictures. She's a mouse. It's told in rhyme.

Gordon 11

Jim Meets the Thing

When Jim met the thing on television. I couldn't imagine how scary the thing was until I saw the thing in Jim's dream. I thought it resembled a dragon-like creature. I myself sometimes is scared by creatures on television. I think the moral of the story is "we're all scared of something, but we shouldn't be ashamed of it" but I'm not sure.

Matthew 12

Swimmy

Swimmy is the book I chose to share with the small kids. Why I pick Swimmy is because many kids always feel they are alone, or they are different from the others. That is what Swimmy felt when all his companies were gone. When Swimmy was travelling alone in the big ocean he saw many

interesting creatures and he learnt that the world is beautiful.

Sze Wa 13

The storybook themes quickly established a rich reference bank and provided a feelings-focussed content to the course. Reading about characters like themselves encouraged both age groups to write with increasing confidence of their keenest interests, their deepest concerns.

The senior students needed little encouragement to write about incidents from their childhood. The writing that followed shared talk led to swift and sure narrations about being lost, having temper tantrums, of dealing with bullies and nightmares and monsters in the dark.

Some titles are particularly effective in prompting such writing. For example, Benjamin and Tulip is a skilful and funny story about two racoons and a rough start to a friendship. Tulip bullies the meek Benjamin in a series of incidents that lead to a satisfying resolution and the end of hostilities. It triggered the following response:

It happened when I first came to Park School. I was new and I only knew a few people. But there was one particular boy his name was Derek. I only knew him a little bit because he was my brother's friend's brother. I was very shy because when I go to new places I get very quiet. One day he seemed to be trying me out to see how I would react. So he called me a name.

I ignored him hoping he would stop. Every time he seen me he would hit me or call me a name. Sometimes I would try and hit him back but he seemed to keep doing it more. I decided if I tried hard enough I would be able to avoid seeing him. I used to go and come to school through the front door because everybody including Derek used to go through the school yard in the back. One day he must have noticed it because he was in the front when I was coming home from school. I tried to pretend that I didn't see him. He walked about four paces behind me and called me every name in the book but I wouldn't turn around. He thought of another process of getting my attention by throwing rocks, but I still ignored him. Then he finally had the nerve to come up and hit me. I could not take it any more so I grabbed him tripped him onto the ground and kept hitting him. Naturally he hit

me back. I gave him a punch. I never usually punch people but I was so mad I got the nerve to punch him. That must have made him realize I wasn't joking because he stopped bugging me from then on. To tell the truth we get along pretty good now. In this story I was like Benjamin.

Sharon 12

A reluctant-to-write student produced the following:

There was one time in my life when I have been like Tulip. I had this friend named Cindy and she has a little brother named Robert we had to share a balcony and she used to sleep over a lot and we use leave her balcony door open because it led into her room and she had a lock on her door and the second door on the balcony was mine so we used to lock my bedroom door and walk from my room to hers then we went down stair of her apartment into her brothers room and poured sugar and toothpaste all over the bed his floor and him we then took some sewing string and wrapped it all around him then she took his slippers we went up to the kitchen and pour I think it was tomato juice in them took some of her fathers rum put it in a glass wiped some on his lips and put the glass on the floor ran up to her room closed her balcony door behind us ran into my room the next morning we got in trouble but it was fun.

Sandy 12

Sandy later chose this as her most satisfying piece of writing and commented:

All kids love mischief but hate to get into trouble and what made it even better was because I was doing it with a friend and didn't get into as much trouble with my parents than if I was by myself.

Students enjoyed groping for memories and when asked to shape fragments into a short narrative piece responded with:

A very long time ago, when I was just able to walk by myself, my father took a walk with me to a nearby pier somedays after dinner. Sometimes we went weekly, but sometimes we did not go for once in a month. We could see the sunset, some fishermen cleaning their boat, some ferries were coming across the sea. My father's and my shadow

shaded a part of the shiny beach. We walked along the beach until the moon took the sun's place.

Sze Wa 13

I remember my old house and the kitchen counter. My mother always sat on it when she was on the phone. I would look up at her, trying to see her face. I would fall over from straining my neck backwards. Then I would cry and my mother would pick me up and put me on the counter. I could look over the entire kitchen. Boy, I wouldn't want to fall from up here! But then my mother would hang up the phone and put me down, telling me to run along to a friend's house or play with my brothers. The kitchen was no longer mine, but I was its. I was engulfed in the hugeness of everything. But it's no more, for I'm big now and can reach the counter from the floor.

Derek 14

Several students chose the writings about childhood memories as their favourite piece.

The most satisfying piece of writing was the one where we went back to the earliest age. I felt satisfied because it was amazing to see my childhood displayed on a piece of paper. The real joy was the innocence I possessed at such a young age and the amount of ignorance I also possessed.

Lisa 12

Cross-Age Tutoring

Concurrent with the intensive reading and writing in response to emerging themes, the senior students began to become familiar with the primary children.

During the first three workshops, groups of three to four visited the classrooms for brief periods. They were free to sit and observe, roam and converse, become involved in activities at the various centres, eventually to engage with a particular child for an extended period.

Back in the workshop setting, their impressions, opinions and questions were shared through talk and writing. Records of

the classroom visits were made as journal entries. Friends read each others' accounts.

In preparation for their first one-to-one encounter with their partners the senior students selected a story to read aloud, considered what they might talk about and organized their workspace so that they could share the story and both work in comfort.

In response to the story and conversation, the primary children made up stories. Mostly they wrote about themselves. Sometimes they retold the story heard, appearing as the central character.

Hearing Where The Wild Things Are prompted:

One cold night I had a good dream. I dreamed I was on an island with friendly scary monsters with horns and big teeth. We had a party with lots of food. I got bored of it and woke up.

Angela 6

Sometimes a theme would trigger a personal anecdote. After hearing a story about sibling rivalry, one wrote:

When I was smaller and wanted to go outside my sister said I couldn't so I got mad. I told my mother and she didn't do nothing. I threw my ball and hit my sister in the arm. She started yelling at me. She threw the ball at me but missed me. She started chasing me but she couldn't find me because I was hiding under the bed. I felt happy because she couldn't find me. The I snuck up behind her and scared her. Then I didn't want to go outside so I watched T. V.

Michael 5

Often the young storytellers introduced their own topic, writing about recent activities:

Yesterday I went to the K. club to have some dinner. It was spaghetti but I missed the dinner. Because I had to go home to get the form to have dinner.

Alison 7

Many of the primary children were beginning readers. A few were beginning to write independently. With help, most could write captions to their drawings. Some used invented spelling, some used personal dictionaries with senior partners printing words in appropriate sections. Those who were not yet reading enjoyed hearing their stories read back to them, and later to the group at large.

The senior students discovered that their partners were eager to read and write. In the discussion that ended the first partnering session, they talked about their recent encounter and planned for their next in their journals.

Two other such workshops followed. In general, the primary children attended eagerly, interested to hear more stories and to talk with the older students. As the collaborations continued, they increased in confidence as storytellers. Most senior students were genuinely interested in their young partners and enjoyed helping them. By trading experiences, admitting difficulties, talking about frustrations and satisfactions, they developed techniques that helped them arouse and maintain their partner's interest and cooperation. They learned how to recapture a partner's wandering attention, how best to relate to a child who was shy or reluctant or obstreperous.

As receivers of the stories, they were encouraged to question, to extend the young child's writing by asking for detail to help shape the story's sequence:

When I give my fish some food he eats it so fast because he is hungry and when I shut the light the fish is scared and when I open the light he ain't scared. He is a boy. I could tell why he is a boy because he doesn't lay eggs. Sometimes the fish bowl is dirty. I put water in a bag. I wash the bowl and I take the rock out too. I carry the fish and I put it back in the bowl.

Elaine 6

Above is what my partner Elaine dictated to me for the story she was writing. Today I feel is a nice day because before Elaine wouldn't hardly talk to me and now she isn't afraid any more. I think I got her out of her shell. Elaine is a very bright girl and she seems to be very proud of what she done today. At first she wouldn't tell me a story so I asked her if she wanted to write it down herself. She said yes. Elaine kept on asking me how to spell words. I told her some letters but others I told her to sound out. After a while I took over the writing. We didn't get the pictures coloured in because we didn't have time so she told me that she would finish it at home. I feel that Elaine is eager to learn and I am eager to help her.

Pauline 12

My mother bought a dog when I was six. I like pets a little. Sometimes I see a cat and I went out to give the cat some milk. I like the dog a little too. I like to keep the cat. Sometimes my dog chases the cat. One day the cat started to talk to me. "May I have some milk" the cat said. I gave him some milk. The dog chases the cat a lot. I said "stop" to the dog. The dog stop when I say stop.

Thang 6

This was the story that my partner and I wrote. I think he wrote this story because I read a story to him that is like this. It was hard to get him to start because he kept saying I don't know, but I finally got him into it. He was interested in everything and especially what things are going to happen next. He asked me a lot of questions but I managed to answer every one of them before he went back to his classroom. I could see he was satisfied. I hope I could work with him again because I know that he would write a long story about What's Next!

Vinh-Kien 12

A highly original story was written during the third collaboration with a partner skilled at questioning. The six-year old in was one of the most skilled and articulate. This was her first full-length imaginative story, begun at the workshop and finished at home.

Sammy wanted to be a giant because he was tired of being small. Sammy ate a magic peanut butter sandwich and turned into a giant. He was as tall as the C. N. Tower. His steps were as big as Dundas Public School. Now that Sammy was too big for his house, he decided to walk around Toronto to see if he could find a house big enough for him to live in. Now he was really tired and decided to go to sleep. When he woke up, he was really hungry. Sammy ate ten pieces of bread and drank a whole jug of milk. It was a really hot day, so Sammy went to swim in Lake Ontario. Then he went to Niagara Falls to take a shower, because the fish got caught in his hair. Sammy wanted to turn back to his normal size. He made another peanut butter and jelly sandwich and he returned to a little boy. He then went outside to play soccer with his friends.

Jennifer 6

Storywriting

Senior students began to outline stories as their work with a partner continued. Drawing on the bank of themes and storylines, they developed ideas they thought suitable for their audience. They chose real characters, created new ones, planned likely events, experimented with different plotlines and resolutions. They learned to select and reject ideas. Some made mock-up booklets. This technique of devising words and illustrations in conjunction, motivated students slow to start and helped keep long-winded writers simple and to the point.

Vinh-Kien's scrutiny of "pop-up" stories and his application of this style of storytelling curbed his tendency to include his every thought in a piece of writing. His heavy head cold inspired:

COLD

There was once a boy named Peter who hated to go to school.

He loved to go out to fly his kite in the park. He liked to play marbles, but he hated school. One day he decided that if he had a cold, he wouldn't have to go to school.

So he started to look for one.

He looked in the closet but there wasn't a cold. He looked in his pocket but there wasn't a cold. At last, he looked in his nose, and there was the cold.

Peter was very happy that he had the cold and he told his mother about it.

His mother made him drink medicine and stay in bed.
He wasn't allowed to play marbles or fly his kite
in the park.
Now Peter was miserable and he wanted to go to
school.

Few senior students achieved this intelligent combination of humour and gentle moral. When writing to get a message across, they tended to be very heavy-handed indeed. A useful approach to discourage a hectoring tone emerged as the conversation turned to humour and the students shared examples from the storybook collection. Some were able to move beyond slapstick and insults as they discovered the effectiveness of whimsy, ludicrousness and other more subtle forms that young children can appreciate. The work of Robert Munsch was particularly useful in this respect (The Dark and Mud Puddle).

Many wrote imaginary stories that featured their partner as the central character. After working for two sessions with Oy-Kengh, Matthew observed "she was very shy at first and still is and I don't know how to make her feel more relaxed. She likes dolls a lot which is why I guess she made up her first story about one". Combining these insights, he began a story for her:

Up in her room, Oy-Kengh was playing with three little bears. The first bear was called Ben. The second bear was called Sue. The third bear was called Helen. Oy-Kengh loved the bears so much she wished they were real. In a sudden shot a falling star flew past her window. "A falling star", she thought, "I wish the bears were real", she said and closed her eyes and thought it over and over again. Then Ben yawned. Oy-Kengh didn't see because her eyes were still closed . . .

The primary children were delighted to appear "in print" and some reciprocated by writing stories about their senior partners. A lively exchange between partners occurred in one group when Cindy read John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat to Jodi who promptly began a critical account of life with her new baby brother. By a happy coincidence, the storybook theme was the appropriate one to release Jodi's grievances. Cindy was sensitive to the feelings exposed and decided to write a fantasy in which Jodi wishes to be a baby again. She wrote this outline:

Jodi is lying in bed wishing she was her baby brother.

Next morning she wakes up and finds herself in a crib in a room full of toys and wallpaper with little teddy bears on it.

Her mother comes in and changes her diaper.

She gets fed in a high chair the way she wanted to be fed. Spills the milk and makes a lot of mess.

She doesn't have to go to school so she is very happy.

She wants to watch T. V. but her mother makes her take long naps.

She got so bored of taking long naps she wishes to be who she was again.

In the morning she is in her own room. She is sucking her thumb and had wet her bed.

Jodi is glad she is a big sister again.

In turn, Jodi wrote about Cindy as her babysitter. The story had a happy ending but only after the babysitter had endured a series of Jodi-instigated pranks.

The students began many stories, ended some. In a few instances, second and third attempts were drafted. The writing-in-progress was shared through the various stages and the students were encouraged to build on each other's ideas. During these workshops there was adequate time to confer with each writer where favoured ideas for stories were discussed and developed. The individual folders of writing were fat by now.

At the final workshop the stories were read to the primary children. With the smaller group it was possible to arrange a reading marathon. The six senior students read and re-read to three and four children at a time so that all of the stories were heard by all concerned. The students in the larger group read their stories to their partner and to any interested other in a loosely structured session.

At the end of the course, teachers comments were invited. Generally, the grade 7/8 teachers found that students had improved in attitude and in their practice of writing. Some weeks later,

it was reported that three students had voluntarily visited the primary rooms for further cross-age tutoring experiences.

Primary teachers attributed children's heightened interest in the written word to successful partnerships in the workshop context. Some children were writing independently for the first time, others were producing longer and more detailed stories.

Ultimately, the three separate phases of the course (intensive reading, cross-age tutoring, and storywriting) coalesced into a powerful experience about the pleasures of reading and writing. On a human level, the children increased their sensitivity to literature and to each other. The senior partners, particularly the ESL students, demonstrated a marked increase in confidence and language competence; withdrawn children learned to extend themselves; the impatient practised tolerance; and poorly motivated children found focus in the partnership. On a technical level, all the children learned a great deal about the practical problems of making stories--about how to make sense out of words and how to put them in an intelligible order.

When children talk about something they really know, individual voices begin to emerge, others listen and begin to write and act with increasing certainty. Elements in the programme are surely conducive to the development of such behaviour. Though there are no formulas for success with every young person, many of the practices described in this report reach the majority most of the time.

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SIX MAGIC WORDS

Brenda Protheroe

The last grade thirteen class of the year at Vaughan Road is marked by tears, embraces and the frantic outpouring of friendship and nostalgia onto the pages of the yearbook. It is a rite of passage, an unspoken acknowledgement that one phase of life is past and a new one about to begin. Not wishing to interfere with the intensity of this ritual, I had decided not to finish our reading of Ted Hughes' The Iron Man¹ which I had begun reading aloud, chapter by chapter, several weeks before. Most students agreed, with just a trace of regret, vowing to borrow or buy the book and finish it on their own. Two young men, however, insisted that they had to finish the book, that they could not go on with the rest of their lives until they found out what happened to the Iron Man and, having found refuge and relative quiet in a corner of the room, they spent the remainder of the period taking turns reading the book to each other. I was struck by two things: by the powerful hold of The Iron Man and by the fact that the finishing of this piece of literature became for those two young men a part of their rite of passage into adulthood.

By the time we started the children's literature unit in April the students had already heard, seen and discussed many books (mostly the picture books, including the two that provoked the most discussion, Russell Hoban's The Dancing Tigers² and Jenny Wagner's John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat,³) as a result of our routine, established at the beginning of the year, of weekly fifteen to twenty minute readings. I did most of the reading but we also had several guest readers. The students reacted variously to my announcement that I was about to read a "children's book" to them--I detected looks and sounds ranging from disdain to

1. T. Hughes, The Iron Man (London: Faber, 1968).

2. R. Hoban, The Dancing Tigers (London: Cape, 1979).

3. J. Wagner, John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

curiosity to enthusiasm, none of which surprised me. What did surprise me, however, was what happened in both classes once I began to read. The desks were in a large circle so that there was an open space in the middle of the room. Two sentences into the story a hand shot up with a request to be allowed to sit on the floor. Making the move a few at a time as the spirit caught them, all but four or five of the thirty hulking grade thirteen bodies in each class spent the first few of their weekly story sessions huddled together reliving, they said, treasured moments and feelings from the past.

The centre piece of the unit itself was the production of student written and illustrated story books that would appeal to children and the "testing" of those books in our junior feeder schools. Much of the work was done on the students' own time but several activities leading up to the creation of the books were completed in classtime, often in small group situations. These activities included storytelling "exercises", a group composition of a modernized fairy tale, the reading and discussion in small groups of selected books followed by a writing activity, and a "fantasy journey". The other component of the unit was a "research assignment" which I will describe below.

I chose two simple, widely-used storytelling "warm-up exercises" to begin the unit: students working in groups of four or five used "starters" such as, "There was an older woman who lived on a hill . . .", "Once, long ago, the Sun and the Moon fell in love . . .", and "The meanest person I ever knew . . .", and one after another added to the developing story and eventually brought it to a conclusion; and, still in groups, retold in the same fashion a fairy tale they remembered from childhood, embellishing it with as much detail as possible. They had great fun doing this and it served to set the tone for the rest of the unit and to start the creative juices flowing. Some groups attempted to make their stories rhyme, others used irony or satire, and one group coined a series of new words to describe their "meanest person".

The modernized fairy tales were written one period and shared with the class the next. The students rediscovered the difficulties and rewards of group composition and produced funny

and clever results, often with overtones of political satire and social commentary. The most applauded was a rendition of "Cinderella" told from Cinderella's point of view in Southern-Californian "Valley Girl" lingo which was popular at the time.

The next step involved the collection in advance of a large number of children's picture books, one for each student in the class. Because of my interest in children's literature I had ten or fifteen in my own collection (which I had not already read to them) and was able to supplement them with a supply from the English Co-ordinator's Office. A children's literature unit for use in grade twelve general level English programs in the City of York had been prepared the summer before, and a box full of books purchased to accompany the unit, so I was lucky enough to have access to this resource. It would, of course, be easy to gather books from local public and school libraries and from the students themselves. Several of my students brought in books they had loved as children and most of them had stories about favourite books and folktales and legends told by Italian, Greek and West Indian parents and grandparents. I think it is important to make sure that the books used at this stage are of high quality; my preference was for well-illustrated books telling a well-developed story with imaginatively drawn characters and settings. Although several were brought in, I avoided the Walt Disney-type books featuring well known cartoon characters such as Mickey Mouse and the Smurfs. The characters and plots tend to be predictable and of limited complexity and nuance.

The students were again divided into groups of four or five (and several groups were sent off to the seminar rooms in the library to cut down on the din in the classroom as roars of approval and explosions of laughter and delight greeted the reading of many of the books) and each student was instructed to read his or her book aloud to the others and then to lead a discussion of as many of the following topics as possible: illustrations, appeal to child or adult, feelings, values, symbols, images, motifs, themes, and language patterns. I wanted to introduce an element of critical analysis to prepare them for what would be expected of them in their "research assignments". We then had a general, whole class discussion of the books and the

topics and they were assigned a piece of writing, the first draft form of which was to be ready for the following class. Basing their writing on the book they had read, they were to (a) write an account of a similar real-life experience they had had; (b) retell the story from a different point of view; (c) write and record two radio "sales-pitches" for the book, one aimed at children and the other at parents; (d) write and record a radio drama script; or (e) write and record a radio commentary. The rough drafts were then revised, edited and recorded (where appropriate). The "sales-pitches" and radio scripts and commentaries were the most popular choices and the "products" were delightful! They displayed great awareness and mastery of the various techniques of soft-sell seduction, hard-sell hucksterism, humour and parody. As someone who normally loathes (and will do anything to avoid) marking, I was shocked to find myself actually enjoying the evaluation of student work during this unit.

The "fantasy journey"⁴ followed by a written account of the journey were the last in-class activities of the unit and involved the teacher providing stimuli for the students' imaginations. The students were most pleased by this activity and found that they were able to develop details of setting and character they later used in their books. I began by asking them to make themselves comfortable, to close their eyes, breathe deeply and quietly and to concentrate on my words and let their minds and imaginations see whatever they wished. Then, speaking softly and pausing frequently to allow them time to explore and embroider the images in their mind's eyes, I talked them out of their seats, through the opened ceiling, propelled and supported by a huge balloon, and through the sky to a landscape in another time and another world inhabited by beings of their own creation. It is important, I think, to draw their attention to details of the landscape and beings, sounds, colours, textures, smells, etc. It is possible to incorporate into a story phrases like "something strange is happening", "notice how the beings are reacting", or "observe how

4. S. Hendricks & G. Roberts, The Second Centering Book, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977).

the situation is resolved". The story-line will at best be sketchy, but the students will be encouraged to think in terms of plot development. I was careful to bring the students back to the classroom from their fantasy world and to allow them a few seconds to review and reflect upon their journeys. I should have posted a notice on the door asking anyone who arrived late to wait for a signal to come in. One young man entered just as everyone had begun to relax and concentrate and was greeted with some hostility!

The students had been told at the beginning of the unit that they would be required to produce a book of their own and so during the time we were spending on the previously detailed activities they were also thinking, planning, writing, revising, illustrating or conscripting illustrators, space editing, organizing and book-making. I had told them that it was not necessary for them to do their own illustrations but that they could arrange for (by whatever means, including, I fear, coercion!) a brother, sister or fellow student to do the illustrations. Most did their own, but the artists of the school soon found themselves in great demand among the others. I was totally unprepared for, surprised and delighted by, the excellence of the sixty books that they produced and cannot begin to adequately describe their diversity; the time, energy and care that had gone into them; and the pleasure and pride they produced in the students. We spent a whole period reading them, marvelling at them and enjoying them. They were truly "works of art".

One of the things that inspired the students, I believe, was their understanding that a real audience existed for their work and that they would personally present it to that audience. There was a fair amount of nervousness surrounding the visits to the junior feeder schools. They had secured a promise from me that they would not be exposed to anyone above grade three ("The older ones are 'killers'"!) and that they could work in pairs. I in turn had made arrangements through the five junior school principals or vice-principals, who were most co-operative, for them to spend time in at least one primary classroom reading their books to the children with the teacher present. My students were eager to return to the schools from which they had graduated and,

where possible, that was arranged. The afternoon of the exodus arrived and off they went looking nervous, some grumbling about not wanting to go and some of the more macho young men worried about their images. One black-leather-jacketed individual, when he came to the classroom to pick up his book (it was not "cool" to be seen carrying it around the school), asked me if he had to go. I sent him on his way. The next morning I saw him in the hall and gone was the mournful expression of the day before. "I was a hero, miss! They thought I was Sylvester Stallone's brother!" Others had similar tales and were considerably buoyed up and excited by their receptions in the various classrooms they visited. After we spent a period exchanging stories, I asked them to write about their experiences. One young woman wrote,

I can't believe it, I actually wrote a book! Not a short story or essay or poem, but a real book with illustrations. Once the book had been laminated and bound together and I held it in my hands, I felt a sudden surge of happiness and pride. Then, when I gazed upon the cover and saw the six magic words--written and illustrated by Jasna Medunic--I almost got up on my desk and screamed with ecstasy. Indeed, finishing my book was one of my finest moments. But then another challenge stood before me. I liked my book, my mother liked my book, but would the real critics, the children, like my book? That was the question. On May 11, 1983, I set off to J. R. Wilcox to find out.

I visited the grade two class first. They were at their desks when I arrived. When I walked in they became very quiet as they stared at me. I walked over to a chair and sat down. Their teacher told them I had come to read them a story. Their smiles widened and then they all rushed to sit at my feet. I told them my name and then we spent the next five minutes trying to guess where I was born. After a while I got to my story. As I read it I looked around at them. Their eyes were wide and their mouths were slightly opened. I continued, feeling a bit more confident. At the end they all clapped and then the questions started. When did I write the book? Why did I pick Sheldon as a name? Was I really eighteen years old? Did I have a boy-friend? Who drew the pictures? The questions were endless, but time was not. Soon I had to go, but not before they told me just how much they had liked my book. I don't think I've ever been praised quite so highly before. I left the class

with my head in the clouds and my feet barely touching the ground.

The next class was a group of grade one students. They were almost like the previous class except that they were much wilder; it took them about three minutes to get settled down. I thought I was in certain trouble. Would these kids sit quietly for five minutes and listen to me as I told them a tale about a short giraffe? For some reason I doubted it. I soon learned that there was a little boy in the class with the same name as my short giraffe. As I read everyone was quiet, some fidgeted at times, but they all listened. When I finished they clapped but Sheldon, the little boy, a little louder than the rest. Unfortunately, only four children were allowed to ask questions and before I knew it, the teacher was thanking me for coming and expressing sympathy that I had to leave so soon. I waved to the children and left. As I skipped down the hallway I felt great. They had truly liked my book. Then and there I decided to go home and write something new for I had, for the first time, realized how it felt to have people really appreciate your work. I also realized that authors take pleasure in their work not just because they make money from book sales, but also because they enjoy it thoroughly. The smiles from the children made up for all the hours I had spent thinking up my tale, and all the nights I had sat up cutting out pictures. It was most certainly a worthwhile experience.

The "research assignment" which was due three weeks after the books and was designed to introduce (in most cases) and reintroduce (in a few cases) the students to other genres, some of the "classics" of children's literature, the work of certain authors or selected fairy tales demanded of them a short (about three pages) exploration of the following topics:

- (a) children's poetry;
- (b) at least two books by C. S. Lewis, Kenneth Grahame, Arthur Ransome, Lewis Carroll, A. A. Milne, Russell Hoban (including The Mouse and His Child),⁵ Susan Cooper, Rosemary Sutcliff or Lyn Cook;

5. R. Hoban, The Mouse and His Child (New York: Avon, 1982).

- (c) two different versions of Hansel and Gretel (Grimm), Cinderella (Perrault) or Snow White (Grimm) and the appropriate chapter of Bruno Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment.⁶

They were directed to discuss characters, settings, values, themes, feelings, appeal and to explain why they liked or disliked the story or collection of poetry. In the case of (c) they were asked to discuss the differences between the two versions of the fairy tale, to outline Bettelheim's interpretation and to comment on it. This topic proved, as expected, to be quite a challenge to those who chose it but they did a superb job. Although the assignment lacked the "glamour" of the making and presenting of the books, I think it played an important role in the unit.

I cannot think of anything in my teaching career that has given me or my students as much satisfaction and reward as this unit. It is not presented here as "state of the art" or as a model to be emulated for there are many such units in use (and yet to be designed for use) in classrooms in the province which are as good or better. It is presented, rather, in a spirit of shared enthusiasm for, and a shared belief in, the joy and benefits of presenting the enormously rich diversity of children's literature to secondary school students. Although the prime objective was to provide a literary experience for the grade thirteen students, there are also, I think, important implications for the literacy of the next generation. I may have oversold it a little but the class passwords became: "What are you going to do for your children?" "Read to them!"

6. B. Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Random House, 1977).

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Epilogue to Chapter Three: Share, Mediate, Listen: Reading and Writing

"What are you going to do for your children?" Brenda Protheroe asks the students in her class. "Read to them!" comes back the answer in chorus. At the beginning of Growing with Books 'share', 'listen' and 'mediate' are named as the refrains that ring through the book. They resonate powerfully in this section. A genuine love of stories that crosses age and grade boundaries is palpable between teachers and students. The authors of the articles, and the child authors they quote, all delight in stories--the ones they read and the ones they write, in the sound and the sense of words, in the shape and pattern of stories, and in the images that words make.

It is the "hands-on" approach to reading and writing that makes the articles so compelling. All the teachers are in the thick of things, mucking about with words. The children in Jo Phenix's class internalize the patterns of stories and make connections between words and meaning. That is because they look, consciously, at the patterns at work in the texts. They learn about alliteration. Struck by the sound of "chilly children", they look for opportunities for words in their own stories that create the same pleasing sounds in their mouths. The children discover that they have something meaningful to say--so the techniques they learn are focused into the best possible ways to say what they mean. They understand what they are reading (and the cadences of spoken language) because, as Phenix says, they expect stories to mean something. So their stories are verbally and visually rich and witty: as in "'A' is for trampoline. Why? Because the trampoline has acrobats"; and in the imagist description of a reflection of a rainbow in a pond as, simply, "a rainbow in a pond".

The value of sharing stories is what dominates the articles by Allinson and Protheroe. The children in Bev Allinson's class share experiences, admit difficulties, and develop techniques that arouse interest and co-operation. They learn to think about words and pictures together. They share writing in progress.

Brenda Protheroe's groups experience first-hand the relationships between literature and life--about the way stories bring people together. The older kids listen to the little ones--and are tickled to find themselves the objects of adoration and admiration. Protheroe's account ends with a lovely affirmation of the value of her experience as something presented "in a spirit of shared enthusiasm for, and a shared belief in, the joy and benefits of presenting the enormously rich diversity of children's literature to secondary school students".

Keep in mind the idea that reading and writing work in tandem; try to connect the stories you read in class with the kinds of stories the children write. With a class of beginning readers, you might listen to the kinds of things they talk about--with you or their peers. In fact, eavesdropping (discretely) is encouraged. Once you have a sense of the hot gossip in the playground, you might use that as the basis for a story, to be composed collectively, individually, or in groups. Try to link what is being written with what is being read--and be subtle if you can. For example, if Jenny (an imaginary student in your class) finds five dollars on her way to school today, you might read Lost and Found by Jill Paton Walsh, or the Andersen tale, The Tinderbox, or the Grimm tale about the genie in the bottle, or Do Not Open (check with other teachers or the school librarian about other appropriate stories). Then ask if anyone has a lost and found story they might like to tell (a word of caution--if the whole thing falls flat, try a different approach, or try something else).

You might also talk about how writers think about composition. Read what Sendak or C. S. Lewis or E. B. White (or one of the class's current favourite authors) say about composition (the bibliography tells you how to find this information). Then talk about how to apply what professional writers say about writing. The best thing you can do, if at all possible, is have a real writer come into your classroom to share stories with your students about writing. Your teacher-librarian, Board of Education, or The Children's Book Centre can probably give you some information on how to get a writer into your class.

Chapter 3: Stories Are For Everyone

Short Bibliography

Books for Teachers

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Books for Children

The authors in this section have provided a wealth of material for linking reading and writing. To isolate a few stories here would impoverish their accounts. So if you are looking for stories to trigger a writing session, look back to their articles and bibliographies.

Getting an Author into Your Class

Children's Book Centre
229 College Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4

Writer's Union of Canada
24 Ryerson Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 2P3

Prologue to Chapter Four

Reading and Writing: How Story Readers Become Story Makers

Storybook Reading and Literacy
Paul Shaw

Would You Rather . . . : Looking at
Drama and Story
David Booth

Two kinds of responses go into the act of reading: an individual, human response, and a response based on a sense of story. Individual human responses vary. Sex, age, social conditions, values, needs--all have a bearing on what the reader will find important in a particular text. The response based on a sense of story comes out of the reader's experience as a reader, that is on his or her knowledge of stories and the conventions of literature. "Reader-response theory" is the new term buzzing around the esoteric hives of contemporary literary theory these days to describe this active kind of reading. It shifts the emphasis from the value of "objective" meaning to the value of the discovery of meaning, an exploration of the relationships between text, reader and author.

You probably want to know what reader-response theory has to do with Language Arts. A lot. The implications of reader-response theory are important for the ways we think about stories and the ways in which we talk about them in the classroom. The articles in this section provide some clues on how to do that.

In "Storybook Reading and Literacy", Paul Shaw talks about how the appropriate context for a story enables children to find the content. He describes how a medieval society comes alive for a group of children when they are asked to imagine going back into that world and participating (as knight or farmers, for example) in it.

The way a child finds his or her own place in a story is the subject of David Booth's article about story and drama. He demonstrates how a story, John Burningham's, Would You Rather . . ., can be the source of a personal drama about the interactions between self and other.

In the end, reader-response theory is simply a way of describing active relationships--conversations--between reader, author, and story. But the implications are profound. The whole idea of what we mean by comprehension comes into question. "Right" answers become less certain. In fact, right questions become less certain. As a teacher, it is up to you to make your students conscious of the fact that they respond to stories actively as individual human beings, and as people who have inherited a legacy of stories.

STORY BOOK READING AND LITERACY
OR
CHILDREN RESPONDING TO STORIES

Paul L. Shaw

One of the significant aspects of language relevant to schooling is facility with the forms and practices of literacy. This awareness is communicated to children (as described previously by Gordon Wells) through storybook reading rather than through talk. Children who have a knowledge of literacy practices have developed through experience with literature an appreciation for the patterns and structures of sustained written discourse. This sustained written language most often is introduced to young children as they listen to stories read to them by their parents. Storybook reading develops the child's sense of story and this sense of story, a macro structure if you will, may be used to organize, make sense of, and to come to know, bodies of information, knowledge and experience. Storybook reading also brings the child to written language in ways that, in part, are determined by its very characteristics. These qualities become apparent when one compares written and spoken language.

Written language differs from spoken language in that the meaning that is to be communicated lies entirely within the text itself. In conversation, the meanings that are exchanged arise out of the context of the current activity, the shared experience and knowledge of the past, as well as the option to question and clarify, as meaning is negotiated between the participants. However, in contrast, in written discourse particular attention must be paid to the language in stories and other written texts, for in order to build up the structure of meaning, it is necessary to attend to the words and structures for they are the sole keepers of the meaning of the text.

Storybook reading also exposes children to the symbolic power of language; its potential to represent experience in symbols which are independent of the objects, events and relationships which are symbolized and which can be interpreted in contexts other than those in which the experience originally occurred:

The Rainbow itself was reborn more magnificently than ever. Out of gratitude, it lifted up the flowers that had saved it and transformed them into glittering dragonflies and butterflies and splendidly plumed birds.

(from The Rainbow Goblins by Ul De Rico)

This is not the language of everyday conversation, but is an example of the kind of "contextually disembedded" language that Margaret Donaldson has argued is necessary for success in schooling in that it permits the child to become capable of manipulating symbols and to deal with more abstract concepts and ideas.

While sharing books in class, the teacher may interact with the students and the text in such a way as to bridge the gap between text, (where the meaning and intentions are fixed), and the child's knowledge and experience of language and the world.

The story as a context for learning is perhaps an extremely effective means for children to make sense of their world. A story may not only be a means of learning new things, but also a way of seeing existing knowledge and experiences in different ways.

The child uses his or her patterns of story--to provide the necessary framework of understanding--in two ways: to learn to organize new knowledge; and to see existing knowledge and experience in alternative contexts. Given this notion it is easy to argue that literacy is the key to all learning.

Consider the formidable task that confronts grade 4 students who might be expected to develop a project about life in medieval times. It is very difficult for young children to conceptualize life in other times. It is necessary for the children to locate, list, summarize; to synthesize a large body of new information; to place this new knowledge into the somewhat unfamiliar and abstract context of a project. Projects, essays or other compositions are expected to communicate what the child has discovered and to organize this information in some way that tells, discusses, argues, and/or explains events which in this case occurred in another time. As teachers we are all familiar with the type of project that we might receive under such circumstances. There is

a clear sense from the language that the child uses, that the child has not made the knowledge, concepts and ideas his or her own. Sentences and overall organization lack the cohesion that would suggest that the child has really assimilated much at all about the project.

Alternatively consider this approach developed by teachers at the Floradale School in Mississauga, Ontario. At the children's suggestion they deal with time by travelling back to the tenth century in a time machine. Travelling back as it were and representing this with a time line helps the children conceptualize their ideas of time. Having arrived back in medieval times, the children in groups are placed in the contexts of various stories.

If one were to view an elementary story structure as having four essential components: a setting; a lack or problem; a resolution; and a restoration to the original set of events, then in this case the children were given the setting.

As reporters from this age who have to gather information to complete a story, they were placed in such settings as a rural farm, a village, with the knights in a castle, or at a wedding at a castle. What is significant here is that the context in which they are to learn is one with which they are most familiar that of a story. The macro-structure or framework within which they are to organize this information is totally familiar, but also because they themselves are participants in the story, they are initially able to act upon this new information in a personal way, which is a necessity if they are to make it their own.

Presented here are examples that illustrate: (1) the central role that literacy plays in all learning; (2) the significance of storybook reading in children becoming literate and (3) the idea that the children's knowledge of story may be used in a powerful way to provide the structure necessary for the learning of new information. If storybook reading leads to a knowledge of literacy practices and the nature of written language, then the stories that are read and the way teachers read these storybooks to children, must also be of considerable significance.

In one method of storybook reading the story is not simply told or read, but the children are able to interact with the text by sharing, questioning, comparing, relating, contrasting and linking prior knowledge and experiences to the story. This interaction, or, if you prefer, participation, bridges the gap between the text and the children's existing knowledge and experience of the world and of literacy practices.

In some ways the interaction with the text may be seen as a type of scaffolding that supports the child in making sense of his world. If in interacting with text, the child is able to bring experience to, and make meaning from, the story, then it may be argued that the text itself has provided the structure by which the child has made meaning.

In interacting with the teacher during story sharing time, meaning may be negotiated, developed and extended by bringing experiences with other literature to the present story. e.g.

T This is one of my favourite stories--
The Rainbow Goblins. Did anyone ever read or
hear about Goblins or this kind of creature?

C Yes (etc.)

T What did you read?

C Goblins--greedy Goblins

C The one I read there was Goblins and they can
fly in outer space.

T And I had another book about Goblins--who can
remember it?--Teepu

C It was called The Goblins.

T What kind of book was it?

C A pop-out book.

T Was there any story in that one?

C The girl chases her brother all around the
forest and the boy sees all these creatures
but the sister doesn't.

T And refuses to believe that they were
creatures.

In this discussion a context for the story is introduced. Jerome Bruner, who first introduced the term scaffolding in reference to mother/child interaction, spoke of "reducing the degrees of freedom, concentrating attention into a manageable domain and providing models of expected language" as useful behaviours in adult/child interaction.

Stories come in various genres, each genre having its predictable patterns and structures that the children come to know through their experience with the genre (often through the storybook reading of the parent or the teacher). It is the experiencing of patterns and structures that develops the child's sense of story. In interacting with the children and the text, teachers can pause for a moment to enable the children to respond to the story by predicting the possible outcomes and so enhance their understanding of the plot and structure. Such pauses may simply be to ask, "What do you think will happen next?":

T If I asked you right now to draw a picture of a Goblin--how would you picture him in your mind?

Just think for a moment--maybe close your eyes and try and picture a Goblin.

(Various images described)

T Now we have an image of a Goblin.

Why Rainbow Goblins? What could Rainbow Goblins do?

C Take the colours from the rainbow.

T Take the colours from the rainbow?

What else could they do?

C Make the colours.

T Make the colours.

C Mix the colours.

T Mix the colours.

C Eat the colours.

T Eat the colours (enthusiastically).

- C Disappear them.
- T Disappear them - good.
- C Maybe they invented them.
- T Invented them.

All those are possibilities that we'll have a chance to explore either in a story or perhaps a play.

Maybe they changed them, maybe they made them disappear, maybe they rearranged the order, maybe they invented them. Let's find out what happens in the story.

Underlying the notion of scaffolding is the idea that whatever the child produces is acceptable. It is the teacher's role to mediate not dictate. Efficient readers and language users use the strategy of predicting words and ideas that will follow what they have already read or heard. For instance, readers who have learned to predict form a hypothesis about what the text is likely to say in the next few words or sentences, and then read on to see if their predictions are correct. Sharing stories is a powerful way to foster prediction strategies.

Relating previous stories and books; contrasting and comparing plots, characters and pictures; reading a series of authors' titles to children--are all ways of having children come to know authors and illustrators and to use this knowledge to predict the nature of the stories, the qualities of the characters and the outcomes of plots. e.g.

Consider this discussion that took place after the reading of "Harald and the Giant Knight" by Donald Carrick

- T . . . What other stories do we know that were like this one?
- C The Stained Glass Window
- C The Runaway Serf
- C The one about the two kids who had to marry each other.

- T The two children that were betrothed . . .
Tell me about one that also had a knight in
it.
- C There was a knight in The Stained Glass Window
- C But he was a good knight--he was kind to his
people.
- T What would it be like to live under a good
knight?
- C Well, a good knight would be interested in his
people - he wouldn't take all their food like
the knights did to Harald.
- C The knight in The Stained Glass Window was a
farmer - he liked to work on the land and be
with his wife rather than to fight.
- T But he did go to the baron's castle each year
to help defend it.

This example is also interesting because the teacher tends to follow the children's lead. In providing scaffolding for the child's understanding, the teacher's participation must be guided by what he or she perceives to be the child's intentions.

Children strive constantly through their actions to make sense of their world and to construct a reality for themselves. Language may be viewed as an object of knowledge upon which children need to act and react in order to make it their own. When reading storybooks to children, the children need opportunity to act (on one or more of the content, the emotions, the language, the symbolism, etc.) on the author's text in order to make the story their own. This may be done in many ways, but most simply through the notion of placing the child into the context of the story. A good example of this occurred during the interaction that surrounded the reading of The Sea People. In this story the people of two adjacent islands who enjoy very different values and lifestyles become pitted against each other as the more aggressive materialistic islanders begin to take the earth from the smaller island so they can further extend their holdings and wealth.

At this point in the story the blind man speaks to the king of the larger island on behalf of his people:

The king screamed in fury, "The law of life demands order and diligence! We on this island have always obeyed the law. We have worked from early morning till late at night. You just live each day as it comes. You are lazy, idle good for nothings!" And he ordered his servants to carry him away.

T How did you feel when you found out that the king said you were "lazy, idle, good for nothings"?

C (Immediately slipping back into role)

Well I don't think it's fair, we have no need to be working all the time, we have time to enjoy our friends, our mountains . . . the ocean . . .

C That's right--why are you people always working all the time anyway?

C But if we do as the king says look at the riches we will have--we'll have treasure, and big buildings and our king will have . . .

C (excitedly butting in) We don't care about those things.

C How do you know that what your king says is right?

In this article I have argued for the importance of storybook reading in the development of children's knowledge of literacy practices. Furthermore, I have pointed out the centrality of literacy to all learning. Examples have been given of children responding to storybooks in a variety of ways which are likely to enhance their concept of story, their ability to use prediction strategies, their knowledge of written language and their understanding of its symbolic power. One way of viewing the teacher/child interaction described here is that the teacher acts as a mediator, interacting with the child and the fixed meaning of the text to move the story closer to the child's level of understanding, i.e. the more skilled language user provides support for the child in developing complex linguistic abilities and the accompanying cognitive demands. The author would like to thank the following teachers who so willingly taped stories being read in their classrooms and who provided the examples used herein: Margaret Simmons, Dundas Street in Toronto; Larry Swartz,

Nancy Wannamaker and Carole Brown of Floradale School in Mississauga.

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WOULD YOU RATHER . . . :
LOOKING AT DRAMA AND STORY

David Booth

John Burningham's wonderful picture book, Would You Rather . . . (Cape, 1978) is a perfect vehicle for blending story and drama when working with children, and I would like to use it as a working model for this examination of the relationship between these two modes of learning. From the very first page, the reader is inside the book, as the author invites him to make a choice from three situations that are presented:

WOULD YOU RATHER . . .
YOUR HOUSE WAS SURROUNDED BY
WATER, SNOW OR JUNGLE

Immediately the children begin choosing the environment that conjures up in them the most vivid images, and when I add to the instructions the dramatic involvement of "You are living in your house in that place at this very moment. Tell me what it is like . . .", they spontaneously are a part of the literary fiction, identifying with their own particular vision of life "there and then" while working "here and now". It is this magic "as if" that authors use to draw the reader inside the life of the book, and drama works on the same premise. Children who have had experience in creating their own drama stories bring a greater sense of expectation to print, since the speculative nature of spontaneous role play develops the child's ability to think creatively, to examine the many levels of meanings that underlie each action, and to develop the "what if" element that is necessary for reading. Just as a story can affect the drama to follow, the learning experience in drama can increase the child's storehouse of personal meanings, thus altering any meaning he brings to the text.

Because of the nature of my work, I generally meet a class of children once in a demonstration setting, and therefore I must choose books that draw from the children an immediate response, so that I can move them into a situation where we can begin building the "as if" world of drama. Would You Rather . . . opens doors at

once with children of every grade level. As I read and show the book, I stop every so often to let the children contribute their responses and feelings about the author's ideas through storytelling and dramatic role play. By questioning a child as if he is in role, I can help him image that world in his mind, and the role gives him the public voice with which to share his creation.

- (Gr.1) Child My house is surrounded by water.
- D.B. Do you live on an island or, perhaps, a house boat?
- Child A peninsula, but you can't get to the top end; it's landlocked by a mountain.
- D.B. Do you have a boat?
- Child Not a motor boat. No one in my family believes in them. We only use sail boats.
- D.B. Well, what do you do if there is an emergency and there is no wind?
- Child There is a kayak, and I can paddle it very fast and go for help. There is a boat ambulance on the mainland.

As I interact with the children, using their own ideas, I am able to help them to understand the consequences of what they are seeing and saying, and together we fashion their own imaginings into a personal, coherent story. Dramatic role play helps the child go one step beyond identifying and empathizing with the story; he begins to use the story elements to structure his own thoughts, reacting and responding personally, entering as deeply as he decides into the new world of meaning. Through drama, he may move from the particular experience of the story to a more general understanding of the nature of what is being explored, making explicit much of what is implied."

WOULD YOU RATHER BE MADE TO EAT . . .
SPIDER STEW, SLUG DUMPLINGS, MASHED WORMS,
OR DRINK SNAIL POP

(Gr.5) Child Snail pop.

 D.B. Where did you get it?

 Child Me and my dad make it every summer. First, you catch the snails. We invented these neat traps. Then, you begin the process of turning them into the drink.

 D.B. How do you go about that?

 Child Well, it's all based on distillation. The important thing is that you just use the essence of snail, none of the meat.

 D.B. Why?

 Child It clogs the straws when you drink the pop.

 D.B. And what do you put the pop in?

 Child Cans

 D.B. Why not bottles?

 Child Well, my dad and me used bottles once, but there was a problem. The night we did it, my dad woke me up at midnight, and he said that they were exploding all over the place because we had used too much yeast, and so we had to take all of the bottles into the back yard and bury them, so that no one would be hurt.

As this child built his personal story spontaneously in role by storytelling, he used his own knowledge and background to elaborate upon the literary stimulus. Drama helps me as a teacher learn what a child has taken from a story, so that I can help him examine and explore the possibilities of what he has read, heard or viewed. By using externalized representations, such as the medium of drama, the child's perception is altered and expanded, and as he grows in his ability in drama, he increases his abilities to communicate his ideas; he grapples with his experiences, plays out his problems and learns to use the conventions of the medium.

WOULD YOU RATHER . . .
AN ELEPHANT DRANK YOUR BATHWATER
AN EAGLE STOLE YOUR DINNER
A PIG TRIED ON YOUR CLOTHES
OR A HIPPO SLEPT IN YOUR BED

These delightful choices promoted much lateral thinking among the children. They hitch-hiked on each other's stories--elaborating, extending and inventing scenarios that revealed the way in which children make sense of the ridiculous, building networks of meaning from each imaginative situation.

(Gr.1) Child An elephant stole my bathwater.

D.B. Were you in the bath at the time?

Child Yes.

D.B. Do you mean the elephant drank the dirty bath water?

Child No! Elephants just put the water up their trunk so that they can use it later on.

D.B. Was the elephant a pet, was it from the circus, or was it a wild one?

Child It was the neighbour's.

(Gr.4) Child An eagle stole my dinner.

D.B. What were you having for dinner?

Child Every vegetable you can think of.

(Gr.2) D.B. A pig tried on your clothes?

Child Yes, my jeans, my T-shirt, my socks and my Adidas.

D.B. Why do you think it did that?

Child It wanted to see me naked.

(Gr.1) D.B. A hippo slept in your bed? Did it break it?

Child Yes, but it didn't mean to.

D.B. What did your mother say?

Child Well, I was afraid to tell the truth, because I had been warned about having all of these zoo creatures in my room,

and my parents had just brought me this
new bed that had been smashed to bits.

D.B. So what did you say to them?

Child I told the truth, because I knew that
 somehow they would understand.

D.B. You must have very fine parents.

Child They're great.

When a child reads a story, it is the dynamic of narrative that drives him on. Often in school we stress the ability to analyse after the story, rather than the skills of making meaning happen while in the interactive mode of reading, in other words, as the child is reading. Of course, teachers who are helping children to learn to read will have to develop strategies that help the child work inside the print mode, as he experiences the words. Drama can nurture this ability.

WOULD YOU RATHER . . .
YOUR DAD DID A DANCE AT SCHOOL
OR YOUR MOM HAD A FIGHT IN A CAFÉ

These two pictures usually take the child on a different journey. In drama, there is the self that one begins with, and the other that one takes on, and the role is the result of this combination. At times, the self drives the drama, dictating words and action from personal background and from a particular values system; at other times, the other is dominant, presenting a complex source to explore through talk and drama. Role is the juxtaposition of these two parts, so that the learning is viewed internally but from a new or different perspective. (It is interesting to note that the artist in Would You Rather . . . has the same child character appear in each picture, as if the self constantly was involved in each new situation). In working with this part of the book, I found that the responses from these two pages were filtered through the personal experiences of the children. Those who chose the dad doing a dance at school had interesting reasons for such a happening--raising money for the Home and School Association, cheering up a class that had done poorly on a test, taking part in an ethnic day's activities. No

one was embarrassed; everyone seemed to think that it had been a positive experience for both the dad and the class. However, when they depicted in small groups the restaurant scene, there were many conflicting emotions, most of them centering on the mother and her actions in the cafe. Many children in their reconstructions defended the mother's actions, but all were embarrassed.

(Gr.5) Child We were in the MacDonald's restaurant.
My mother was in line, when suddenly a
man butted in front of her. Right
away, my mother's lover came up and
told that guy to get back into line.

Story after story concerned wrongs being righted, tensions taking over reason, families in disagreement. The story had triggered many stored-up situations that were now being played out. The self and the other were melding, and the children found themselves united in their feelings about the row. This intersection of the child's private world with the world of the story produces power for building comprehension and response. A resonant relationship is set up between the individual responses of the students and the story. The child begins interacting with the story in ever widening ways, adding to his childhood's garden the lives of his classmates, the world of the author, and his new-found perceptions in role. (Burningham's Everychild is shown to be embarrassed in each situation).

Of course, in a regular class with time to develop the situations, each of the ideas can be the beginning of full-fledged drama lesson as well as a stimulus for word play and dramatic brainstorming.

WOULD YOU RATHER BE LOST . . .
IN THE FOG, AT SEA, IN A DESERT, IN A FOREST OR IN
A CROWD

Each of these settings has been the basis for building a whole-class drama lesson, depending upon the interests of the group. We have discovered missing cities arising from the mists of the past; we have been in lifeboats lost on the sea and found an island from The Lord of the Flies; we have searched for water

on a desert, only to find it was controlled by an evil king; we have found a society in the forest that lived underground for their entire lives; we have been lost in a crowd of aliens, unable to reveal our true identities until we could find someone we knew to be trustworthy.

Children learn to read through personal relationships and the process of reading becomes an extension of these relationships. The child relates to the story in terms of his own identity, just as who he is determines his response to his family, his friends and his environment. His story has to fit with his own experiences and with the expectations of his community. By responding to other people's cues and by having them respond to his, the child begins to establish his own identity, borrowing from others to see how his story fits theirs. He explores life through his own storying and through the stories of others, creating his own unique narrative, his own way of representing yesterday, today and tomorrow.

WOULD YOU RATHER . . .

YOUR HOUSE WAS SURROUNDED BY WATER, SNOW OR JUNGLE

A grade one class had chosen their environments. Each child was demonstrating the difficulties and pleasures of his particular setting, and I was observing them and gently prodding them with specific questions about the nature of their life styles. A child with Down's Syndrome was making angels in the snow, and, unsure of his abilities, I began asking him questions:

(Gr.1) D.B. Is your house surrounded by snow?

Child (Nods affirmatively).

D.B. Do you like living here in the snow?

Child (Again nods "yes").

D.B. Are you the King of Winter?

Child (Nods "yes").

D.B. Then what are you wearing on your head?

Child A crown of ice.

I would rather the children wore crowns of ice in summer, had eagles steal their vegetables, let hippos sleep in their beds, take breakfast in balloons, and be lost in childhood gardens. As would, I am certain, John Burningham.

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Epilogue to Chapter Four: The Reader in the Story

This is the first of two explorations (the second one is at the end of the next chapter) of the relationships between reading and writing. In asking "What would happen if . . ." or in thinking about the story "as if you had to act in it", connections between reader and story, between literature and life, are established. The reader who challenges the story becomes an active participant in it rather than a passive voyeur of words on the page.

The act of challenging the words in the story is really just a version of what used to be known as "close reading". As a case in point, Alice gets an excellent lesson on what words mean (and don't mean) from the March Hare--who says, "I say what I mean" is not the same as "I mean what I say". To clarify the issue, he adds, "You might just as well say . . . that 'I like what I get' is the same as 'I get what I like'". Which it is not, of course.

Reading has to do with making stories, with figuring out what it is an author wants to communicate to a reader, and how the reader goes about discovering that meaning. It is up to us, as teachers, to use our knowledge of stories and story grammar to bridge, as Paul Shaw says, "the gap between the text and the children's existing knowledge of the world".

David Booth and Paul Shaw provide practical guides on how to encourage children to become active participants in stories. They suggest two basic routes for the teacher: follow unexplored options; and fill in parts of the story that the author doesn't tell. The point of the exercise is that the reader becomes both author and character, drawing on his or her own experience of life and of the story.

The honest dialogue about stories in which Booth and Shaw engage the children accounts for the kinds of remarkable responses they get. The children are encouraged to imagine themselves in the picture that the author is creating, to imagine themselves as characters in the stories, to act in ways that enable them to respond to the demands of the plot, to anticipate what might happen next and why--then to imagine the consequences of those actions.

The children are also asked to make connections between the story and their own lives. In the examples cited, the children come up with stories of breathtaking strength and economy, stories that show depths of humanity, sympathy, courage and understanding that astonish us. As grown-ups we don't expect to see that range in children. The example David Booth gives of the child who makes up a "Would you rather . . ." story about the mother who is jostled out of line at MacDonald's is especially wrenching: the lover of the child's mother tells the guy "to get back into line". The phrase carries within it a whole book of stories, a lifetime of stories about the child's knowledge of human (especially family) relationships, power struggles, knowledge of good and evil, and, implicitly, a great deal more than can be said here.

It is up to the teacher, as David Booth says, to bridge the gaps between literature and life, to help the child learn "to use the story elements to structure his own thoughts," and to move "from the particular experience of the story to a more general understanding of the nature of what is being explored". Paul Shaw makes a very perceptive comment about how to do that when he talks about how the teacher must follow the lead of the children: the teacher has to listen. Because, as teacher, you can only mediate between the child and the book if you can figure out what it is the child wants to know. As it says in The Formative Years, it is up to you to help children "draw in references from context, relate them to personal experiences, and extend the ideas presented in a variety of ways".

Now for examples of questions that might be used in the context of two stories that encourage thinking about relationships between literature and life: From The Mixed up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler and Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang. Both are mystery stories--and they are about relationships between siblings, and about running away. Both stories also provide lots of "what would happen if . . ." points of departure.

In From The Mixed Up Files, for example "What would happen if . . . the children thought about what running away would mean for their parents? What were their parents thinking about while they were gone? What would you do if you were the parents looking for the children? Could you figure out where they might have

gone? Where would you go if you wanted to run away from home? Why? Would you worry about your parents being worried? Could you allay their fears? How? By living in the museum, are the children breaking the law? What would happen if they broke something?"

In Jacob-Two-Two, you might consider the whole problem of justice. Although the Hooded Fang is revealed as a good guy in the end, he still has a lot to answer for. The children were, after all, locked up under pretty terrible conditions. So you might think about a trial for the Hooded Fang. Or you could think about all the other possible stories in the story. "Does being a member of Child Power help Jacob come to terms with the injustice of his littleness? What other adventures could Jacob have with Child Power?"

In thinking about these kinds of questions, the reader is put in touch with two things that are important to reading and writing: how others feel in a given situation; and how well the writer of the story makes the characters alive and true. The child learns as it says in The Formative Years, to "recognize and appreciate models of good writing".

As readers examine their own responses to a situation they become conscious of the skill (or lack of it) that the writer has used under the same circumstances. Has a writer made a wrong choice about the direction of the story or the development of the character? Only by getting inside the story is it possible to find out. That is how skill in reading and writing--and imagining--develops. David Booth puts it best at the end of his article: "I would rather the children wore crowns of ice in summer, had eagles steal their vegetables, let hippos sleep in their beds, take breakfast in balloons, and be lost in childhood gardens".

Chapter 4: Story Readers into Story Makers

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Prologue to Chapter Five

More About Reading and Writing

Finding the Right Book at the Right
Time

Judy Sarick

Reading to Children

Joan McGrath

Teaching Reading with Children's Books
Barbara Park

Canadian Magazines in the Classroom
Kathy Lowinger

Once we begin to think about reading as something that has to do with stories rather than with decoding, teaching reading has to be looked at differently too. Words on the page acquire more than just a sound/sense value. They acquire a human dimension. In Growing With Books, we stress that reading can be encouraged by providing material that makes the task worthwhile.

The first thing to do is find stories that children want to read: real stories as opposed to stories which have been designed to teach children how to decode print. The articles that follow are about teaching reading in accordance with a refocused point of view of what we are doing and why. They are about how to share, mediate and listen.

Judy Sarick sets the tone. She begins with a dramatically moving example of the way a child she knew used the story of Babar to come to terms with a disturbing event in her real life. But to say any more would spoil the effect. Read the essay. Besides her stories about stories, Judy Sarick provides exactly the kind of practical advice you need to help you share books with children. Joan McGrath is next--with a wonderfully straightforward approach to reading. Read stories out loud. Stories you like. In reading out loud new readers hear the cadences of story language; beginning readers struggling to make sense of the words on the page, become conscious of the rhythms of well-made sentences.

Barbara Park stresses the fact that children have to practice if they are going to learn to read. And to get them to

want to practice, children must honestly believe that reading is a worthwhile way of spending time. Kathy Lowinger suggests tackling the problem of finding something that children want to read by introducing children's magazines, particularly Owl and Chickadee, into the classroom. Not only are the children's magazines interesting, accessible and well written, but they serve another important function. They provide visible images of Canadian landscape and culture. So the children see stories that enable them to make sense of their own environment. Besides, as Lowinger says, magazines are made to be "folded, spindled and mutilated".

In sum: the writers in this section offer approaches to reading that make the work of learning to read worth the effort. First, make reading a regular activity. Read out loud, and be seen to be reading on your own time. Provide as many books as you can, preferably books you like and think the class will like.

FINDING THE RIGHT BOOK AT THE RIGHT TIME

Judy Sarick

Once, early in my career, I learned an important lesson from a three-year old. She had been watching Mr. Dressup on TV when they interrupted the broadcast to show the shooting of John F. Kennedy. The child, whose television viewing had been carefully monitored, was very distraught. The following day when she had calmed down she told her mother, "President Kennedy was shot by the hunter, just like Babar's Mother". This youngster had clearly demonstrated to me that the real power of fiction lies in its ability to help us come to an understanding of ourselves and others who touch our lives.

As a classroom teacher there are many steps you can take to help make meaningful connections between children and books.

The first thing to do is to read as many children's books as you can. Read picture books, read folktales, read poems, read novels and read books of information. The more you read the easier it will become to choose the books you want to use and the books you like to recommend.

When you have a wide reading background it is interesting to read what others have to say about children's literature in magazines like Signal, The Horn Book, and Canadian Materials.

It is often enlightening to talk to other teachers and the teacher-librarians about children's books they have read.

Buy lots of books for your classroom so that your students can have immediate access to good literature. These books should cover a wide range of topics and many levels of reading difficulty.

When you decide which of the picture books, poems, stories, and novels you like best you can share your pleasure by reading them aloud to the whole class.

Talking about specific books to the entire class can get them excited about reading. You can pick one important feature of a book and relate it to a shared experience, or to another book. For example, Tommy, in The Genie of Sutton Place hides at night in

a museum, as do the children in From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.

One of the most effective ways to help children make appropriate choices is to talk to them individually. This can be more effective if you follow up on what you know the child has read or is interested in. For example, if you know that Susan is driving with her family to the West Coast, you might suggest she read Hey Dad by Brian Doyle.

Listening to what the children have to say about the books they are reading, independent of the formal reading programme, is an easy way to show that you respect their opinions; it can also give you wonderful insights into how well they are reading.

Class visits to the school library for book talks will reinforce what you are doing in the classroom as well as giving the children the benefit of another adult's reading knowledge and taste.

Class visits to the Public Library are yet another way to offer your students choice, variety and exposure--key factors in the education of a reader.

Inside the classroom it is important to create a place where a child can read a book, see pictures in her mind's eye, and keep it all private. For reading most of all is a solitary pleasure that can be enjoyed without electronic equipment or a special theatre or batteries or a partner. It is a pleasure that can last for a few minutes or several hours. It is a taste that must be acquired by practice until it becomes a lifetime habit.

Children of all ages are dependent upon an adult to help them have these experiences, to help them find the right book at the right time. When I was a child (long before schools had libraries or even many books other than readers) I went to Boys and Girls House of Toronto Public Library and talked to my librarian, Miss Cooke. Every week she suggested books for me to read. Usually I liked the ones I chose to take; sometimes I thought they were awful and cast them aside after twenty pages. But every so often I read a book that was overwhelming; a book that lived inside me; a book that helped me understand or see things I had never seen before. I can remember the emotions I felt to this day, although I would have a hard time telling you about

the plot or characters. The house in Madeleine haunted me until I found the book again when I was in my early twenties. The Water Babies and Little Men affected me as can almost nothing I read today. A friend of mine attributes her dedicated socialism and humanitarian spirit to her reading of the novels of E. Nesbit and to the librarian who first interested her in them.

When I became a children's librarian myself I learned that in order to bring children and books together you have to know a good deal about what is inside the books.

You have to know children and be willing to listen to them. You have to build their trust so that they will not just borrow the book but actually read it, then come back to ask you for another. When this happens it is a joy for you as well as the child.

READING TO CHILDREN

by Joan McGrath

It isn't too often that anything adults are encouraged to do "for the children" is a pleasure in and of itself. Reading aloud is one of those rare, rewarding activities. Sharing a book with a child (or children) allows an intimacy and communion all too rare in these noisy times. First, last and always, the pure pleasure of the experience would make reading aloud more than worth the time spent and trifling effort required, even without a flowering hedge of "fringe benefits".

Reading aloud, whether to one's family, one's children, or indeed anyone of whatever age with whom it seemed pleasant and desirable to share a favourite story or verse, was a popular pastime not so very long ago; in a quieter time, to be sure. The honourable place of the storyteller or reader aloud was usurped first by radio and the early "talkies", then by television, and most recently by video; and that is a pity, for several reasons. Anyone interested enough in the subject can undoubtedly suggest many of the benefits of reading aloud for both reader and audience; but some aspects of this rather-neglected subject bear reiteration, especially in the particular area of reading aloud to children.

Reading time should be a time for pleasure, for stretching while relaxing the mind. Where television and video shrink the viewer's ability to imagine or visualize, reading aloud puts demands on these underused faculties. Most children spend the greater part of their time in school fully occupied with the difficult though rewarding work of mastering a challenging curriculum. Learning to read is in itself a gigantic task. We adults who have long since forgotten our own first stumbling attempts, no longer appreciate what an effort it all seems just at first.

Even those beginners fortunate enough to have appropriate, attractive, intrinsically enjoyable materials available, are at first so deeply engaged with the mere mechanics of reading that the experience is likely to be one of effort rather than of pleasure. The unlocking problems they face require deep

concentration, to such an extent that young readers, while they may well decode all the words, quite miss the tune. They plod along and reach the goal, but they don't really have much chance to enjoy the trip.

That is where the reader-aloud comes into the picture. A reader who chooses the right sorts of varied and attractive materials keeps alive in the beginner's mind the hope and belief that soon he or she too can make free with "real" books, not repetitious controlled-vocabulary readers; books that even an adult can read with obvious pleasure. Which brings us to an important--the important--point about reading aloud. Make sure you can bring your own pleasure to the experience, and ensure that the reading will be one the children will remember with delight.

It isn't such a big problem, after all. In fact, it should protect you from one of the minor agonies some good-hearted but mistaken persons undertake with the best of motives and the poorest of results: don't read aloud any piece of literature, at any level whatever, that you yourself do not find enjoyable. Since we live in a society wealthy beyond the dreams of literary avarice, it will be truly amazing if you cannot find something to read that both you and your children can share with genuine pleasure.

Build a personal repertoire of such enjoyable stories, and add to it continually. You'll read a selection better every succeeding time, and if it is a well-chosen tale, it will remain evergreen. It's a truism among librarians that you simply cannot sell a book that you yourself don't enjoy, however hard you work at it; maybe because you have to work at it. Somehow, try as you will, the true joy is lacking. Magically, the children instantly recognize this fact and greet such efforts with apathy or downright hostility. On the other hand, when you share a book you genuinely do enjoy, the children sparkle along with you, begging for 'just one more chapter', and demanding more books as good as that one; the applause rewards reading-aloud in much the same way as a curtain call rewards a performance on stage.

Make no mistake, this is your chance to be better than a star. You get to play all the parts! You can be a ghost, a pirate, a swashbuckler or a bear--no props or costumes needed.

But as with any performance, a rehearsal will be necessary if the performance is to be a polished one. It's a cardinal mistake to launch into unknown waters before an audience. Chances are you'll escape unscathed almost every time: but almost isn't good enough. Those who have attempted this foolhardy feat could share quite a few stories of embarrassing moments. The problems that arise may be simple ones of stumbling over unfamiliar names or uncommon words; mid-story is no time for a demonstration of dictionary skills. You may not find the proper cadence, or may fail to project the tones of surprise, fright, suppressed mirth, etc., that may be crucial to achieving the desired effect. Worse, it may be that you have unwittingly embarked upon a story whose content will be embarrassing or offensive to you or to the audience. Don't make such a mistake "on stage"; try it out on the dog.

A good read-aloud need not be new, any more than it need be a veteran: good titles can be found in both categories. What it must do is read aloud well. Lots of good read-to-yourself titles are just that; somehow, when read aloud, they do not fall pleasingly on the ear. Some have long, dull introductory chapters to which young listeners respond with impatience. (Remember, you don't have to read everything in any text. Good readers-aloud edit as they go, where necessary). A mere handful of sure-fire read-alouds for juniors might include such favourites as Underground to Canada; How To Eat Fried Worms; The Best Christmas Pageant Ever; The Secret Garden; The Dog Who Wouldn't Be; Lassie Come Home; The Iron Man; How Tom Beat Captain Najork and His Hired Sportsmen; The Pinballs; The Great Gilly Hopkins. Pick one you like, and read it to yourself; if possible make a tape of yourself as reader, to monitor your own performance.

Choose materials suited to the age and interest levels with which you are dealing. And be sure to call upon the assistance of those best prepared, indeed most eager, to assist you in doing so: the teacher-librarians whose business it is to keep abreast of today's floods of new materials. A lot of wonderful new books are available--and so is a lot of dross. The classroom teacher quite simply has not got the time, and possibly not the expertise, to plough through great mounds of new titles in order to discover the

best and eliminate what is inappropriate, while the teacher-librarian's work entails doing just that.

It is all too common a mistake to select one's own cherished storytime favourites and read-alouds, without reconsidering them in light of the new function they are now to perform. Have they really stood the test of time, and do you remember the contents as well as you think you do? Just consider: part of what you loved about those well-loved stories had to do with the circumstances in which you first encountered them; and do remember, you were a lot younger then, with unformed and uncritical tastes. Reread the "olde tyme" favourite to yourself. You may rediscover it with undiminished pleasure, but you will be worse than dismayed if you begin to read a book you once enjoyed only to find that it espouses attitudes or language that are today considered offensive, or that a book you have advertised as a great treat is one you now find no longer to your taste.

Don't ever call youngsters away from some pursuit in which their interests are fully engaged for their prescribed 'reading time'. Even if it is to hear a story they'd ordinarily enjoy, they will certainly feel nothing but resentment if it interrupts a baseball game. Who wouldn't? Excellent times for reading are directly after a strenuous activity, at the completion of a project, or at the end of the day, when the youngsters are in a relaxed and receptive frame of mind, just as bedtime is the best reading-aloud time in the home.

It may be tempting to make read-aloud time merely an extension of the curriculum portion of the school day; but resist the temptation. Make reading time a looked-for treat, not just another treatment. Youngsters who have spent all day hard at work (and never forget just how hard that work is; according to most experts, learning to read is the most intellectually demanding effort most people ever undertake in their whole lives!) should not be faced with more of the same in what is supposed to be a pleasantly relaxing interlude. Leave the reading instruction and lectures on content subjects to instructional time. This is your best chance to demonstrate why all the day-by-day slogging really is worth while.

This is your opportunity to provide living proof that you, yourself, are glad you learned to read because it can be such a source of pleasure. Always remember that some of the youngsters in any given class may have had little or no opportunity to observe any other adult who plays a meaningful part in their lives voluntarily reading just for the love of it. Almost everybody tells children they should read in order to enjoy books and to explore their riches; but does anyone model this much-lauded behaviour for them? You can ensure that they will have seen at least one adult practicing what everyone preaches. All day you and your children have been busy seeing that they dealt faithfully with the meat and potatoes of education; now sit back, smile, and offer the dessert.

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TEACHING READING WITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Barbara Park

We have a tradition of teaching children to read with textual material specially written for beginning reading instruction and in many cases it is pretty dull stuff. Whoever would voluntarily read and reread such nonsense as "Come, come. Look, Look, Look!" or "The thin pin is made of tin"?

The joy and satisfaction of reading real stories is not something that should or need be postponed until young readers have acquired a basic sight vocabulary or specific phonics skills. Beginning reading can be taught very effectively using stories, poems, songs and expository text from the best children's books available. The shift to independent reading (from being read to) is a gradual one.

In order to become competent readers, youngsters need lots of repetition and practice. Traditional materials for reading instruction have depended heavily upon vocabulary control, word drills and workbook exercises to provide this repetition. The chances of inducing independent practice are much higher if the reading materials themselves attract the reader back again and again.

Many children start school eager to learn to read independently because they have had powerful positive experiences with books during their pre-school years.

These fortunate youngsters who have been read to regularly have already developed a repertoire of favourites which they have requested again and again. They know the pleasure that comes from good books and the joy and satisfaction that comes from sharing them with others.

As they have watched and listened while being read to, and explored books independently in their daily play, they may have memorized chunks of text--even whole stories verbatim and identified many of the conventions of English stories.

Children who have handled books and talked about them also frequently understand terms that teachers sometimes take for granted such as "page", "word", "line" etc.

Most importantly, children who have been read to have high expectations from print and have developed a strong intuitive sense of how different types of text work. They can often predict the concept, phrase or word that will come next in an unfamiliar story. Without these competencies children cannot read, they can only name words; these essential understandings only develop out of broad and varied encounters with real books.

Children who have had extensive experience with books in their early years tend to make an earlier and easier start with reading and writing and have a clear advantage over those who come to us lacking this background. We must use teaching strategies and materials that take advantage of children's book experience where it exists and build that background where it is lacking.

In order to teach beginning reading with children's books teachers need to understand the nature of the reading process, be familiar with patterns of literacy development in young children, have access to a number of high quality books (borrowed from libraries, bought in bookstores and provided in the classroom), develop teaching strategies consistent with these new understandings and materials.

The teacher must understand that reading is not an exact process in which the reader identifies every letter sound or word. The reader uses the print and relates it to past experience to construct and predict meaning.

The first books for reading instruction should be selected very carefully. Above all else they must contain pieces of text that children will enjoy and want to read again and again. Motivation for reading must come from the task itself, not from minimally related extrinsic rewards. High quality text and the satisfaction derived from reading it provides the most effective sustained motivation a child needs to become a reader.

It is best to start with highly predictable picture books which have only a few lines of print per page and provide maximum support for the reader. Such support can occur in a variety of ways including rhythm or rhyme, repetition, familiar sequences or routines and new renditions of well-known stories, poems and songs. Illustrations should compliment the text and help children

predict what the print is going to say but not tell the whole story.

Once: A Lullaby by b. p. nichol is a good example of such a book. It starts:

Once I was a little horse, baby horse, little horse.

Once I was a little horse. NEIGH, I fell asleep.

The pattern is repeated throughout the book with a cow, goat, sheep, pig, cat and other animals until the last page. It reads:

Once I was a little girl, baby girl, little girl.

Once I was a little girl. WAA, I fell asleep.

The pictures on each page help the children predict the name of the animal and the cry it makes then these predictions can be confirmed by the appearance of the words.

It is important that children start with an understanding of the whole text whether it be a story, song, poem or expository selection before they attend to the smaller constituent parts such as words or letters.

Shared reading introduces new readers to the situations, images, vocabulary and complex sentence structures of written language. A shared reading session has clearly defined components and starts with the children rereading together a number of favourite stories, songs and poems they have enjoyed together in the past. Next, the teacher introduces an exciting new book to the children by reading it aloud with all the drama and enthusiasm a good reader can muster. The youngsters can follow along in a "big book" or individual copies of regular sized books and are encouraged to listen, enjoy, predict and join in the reading whenever they feel they know what is coming next. Repetition and practice follow with multiple readings by groups and individual children supported by the teacher in much the same manner as group and individual readings of language experience charts take place.

After the children and teacher have read old favourites and then the new book together it is time to focus on some particular aspect of language instruction to which one of the books lends itself.

Good stories enjoyed together provide rich opportunities for writing, drawing and dramatizing to expand the depth of understanding of the text. Bland and boring reading material makes it more difficult for the teacher to come up with good ideas for extending the reading experience.

An essential component of shared reading which must not be overlooked is the independent reading of the books that have been read together. This cannot be left to chance or be something the children do only if and when other work is completed. It must be a regularly timetabled daily activity. During this period the children may read aloud to each other in pairs or small groups, read along while listening to a tape of the story, read with the teacher, an older child or parent volunteer, or read alone. They may select from the growing collection of books read together during instructional periods or read other books available in the classroom library. The primary objective of this period is time-on-task doing real reading from real books.

It's obvious that in order to run a beginning reading programme based on good quality children's literature one must have lots of books. The acquisition of a large and varied classroom library should be a priority for every primary teacher.

There are many ways to collect such a library and if several approaches are followed it is surprising how quickly a good collection will build up.

School librarians can be very helpful in assembling collections from the main school library which can be held in an individual classroom for a few weeks.

Many School Boards have diverted funds (formerly allocated for the purchase of consumable workbooks) to the purchase of paperback trade books and have collections which are rotated through several classrooms over the course of a year. Many schools are suggesting that funds raised by parent organizations be used to purchase classroom paperback libraries.

Public libraries hold sales several times a year to clear shelf space for new acquisitions and good used children's books can be purchased at very modest prices. Many teachers have found garage sales and used book stores also offer a fine source of inexpensive books.

Families are often willing to lend books to their child's class for a period of several weeks on the clear understanding that the teacher and children will take the best possible care of the borrowed materials.

Children's book clubs offer an inexpensive opportunity for teachers to supplement the class library as well as giving parents and children easy access to good quality paperbacks at reasonable prices. Book clubs must be handled very sensitively by the teacher so that children do not feel pressured to buy or left out if unable to purchase books. Many teachers use the free bonus books to make sure that every child experiences the pride and satisfaction of owning books.

The rewards of learning to read with the best books available are high for children.

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CANADIAN MAGAZINES IN THE CLASSROOM

Kathy Lowinger

If you came across a Horned Sea Slug, would you recognize it? Would you want to? You could and you would if you were one of the legion who are learning about the world through the pages of Owl magazine.

Owl and other fine Canadian children's magazines have a unique ability to combine glorious visual images with accurate, current information, making them a valuable resource in any classroom.

Not too long ago, if a magazine appeared at school, it was relegated to recess-reading, or it peeked illicitly from under a pile of texts. All that changed in the mid-seventies. Several educators who believed Canadian children should have the chance to learn about their own country through the words and images of Canadians, deliberately picked the magazine format for its low cost, its balance of words and pictures, and its recurring nature, which gives it the ability to build and convey a long-term message.

WHY MAGAZINES?

Magazines are not a stepping stone to real resources. They are a real resource, sparking endless activity ideas. First, a warning.

Magazines should not be approached as throw-away books. They do not replace books, nor do they necessarily foster a taste for books. Few students will joyfully fling aside a copy of any magazine to announce: "Bring on the books". However, magazines may encourage reading. Because the images draw the reader's attention and provide explanation themselves, the words do not need to be watered down. Students can, and do, read beyond their expected level. The pairing of words and images, combined with compelling content, make magazines attractive and accessible, even to reluctant readers.

Another reason for considering magazines is their extraordinary flexibility. A recent copy of Chickadee was devoted to covering a lot of territory between A and Z--between aardvarks

(and anteaters and armadillos) and zebras. The issue also included plenty of those magazine features you probably knew and loved in your own childhood: spot the differences between two sets of pictures; mazes; connect-the-dots and a comic strip.

Crackers is a relatively recent addition to the Canadian children's magazine scene--more broadly-based than the Owl/Chickadee naturalist magazines. A recent issue included features on a circus school, recipes for make-your-own iced sweet-treats, a photo-essay on Parachute Club making a rock-video, a short story, and a promotion for a writing contest.

This flexibility makes magazines a special boon to the integrated classroom. Students can be working at the same activity broken down into different tasks to challenge them regardless of their abilities. Owl and Chickadee are available in French as Hibou and Coulicou, making them an asset for French immersion.

With such a resource readily available, why any reluctance to use magazines? Attitude, timing and cost may present discouraging problems.

If you have always thought that magazines are not "serious", it may be time for you to look again. They convey facts concisely, but with more detail than is possible in a newspaper. Canadian magazines are published with remarkable sensitivity. They are uniformly non-sexist. They avoid stereotypes of race, age or ability. Whether their focus is the environment, as in Owl, or the contemporary world as in Jam, they give students a positive message: Despite real problems, the world is wonderful and it's yours. You have a responsibility to it.

Co-ordinating lesson plans, the budget, and the timing of magazines requires effort. To find articles in back issues of magazines, you can refer to the periodical indexes in the library. Information about up-coming issues may seem more difficult to find, but in fact it only requires effort and some planning.

By writing to the publisher for the year's list of features, a teacher can plan to incorporate magazines into lesson plans effectively.

Advance planning can also reduce the cost of magazines. Although a magazine is a relatively inexpensive item, multiple

copies in the classroom may seem like a pipe dream. By contacting the publisher directly to pinpoint the issues required, ad hoc arrangements may be made for bulk orders at lowered costs.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

The best source of ideas for magazine use is the magazine itself. Suggestions can range from the zany and light-hearted (a game called "I Beg You Pardo" which requires talking all day without using the letter N) to the informative (match up eggs with the insects they will become). Almost every activity is planned with a realistic understanding of the resources available to most teachers. There is no call for exotic, dangerous equipment of the "first go out and buy a vapourizer" school.

A magazine itself is a terrific physical resource. It can be coloured, filled in, cut up or mounted on cardboard. All of us have an understandable revulsion at the idea of mutilating a book. No such taboo exists about magazines. In fact, they are designed to be folded, spindled and mutilated.

The production of magazines is also a rich lode of activity ideas. Every magazine welcomes the involvement of its readers through letters to the editor, stories, drawings, poems and article suggestions. Owl, Chickadee and Crackers also feature their readers' writing and drawing. Students can be drawn into the complex and fascinating process of publication by inviting writers, illustrators and publishers to meet their readers.

THE MAGAZINES

Canada's small market and massive foreign competition make magazine publication a perilous undertaking. Many fine magazines have not survived. Ahoy, Mountain Standard Time, Canadian Children's Magazine, Jabberwocky, and Magook are all victims. If the excellent magazines available to us now are to flourish, they require our attention.

Crackers

Crackers aims at its junior-level readers with bright, colourful animal stories and nature articles, profiles of famous people, puzzles and jokes. A recent issue featured

B. J. Birdie, the Blue Jay's mascot; a story by Jean Little; an Endangered Animal maze; and answers to pressing questions: Is there such a thing as a mermaid? Activities such as making an apple-head witch, tracing the family tree or learning how to conduct an interview lend themselves well to many grade levels.

Crackers, (ISSN 07-1363-3-1), Scholastic-TAB Publications Ltd. 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 3G5

Jam

Jam is written for the ten to fifteen year-old readers. Regular items are movie, book and record reviews and advice columns. It has fashion articles, stories by well-known writers and readers' poetry. JAM treats provocative subjects well. Can magazines produce art? What is it like to experience role-playing games?

Jam Magazine, (ISSN 02-2806-2-0), 56 The Esplanade, Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1A7

Owl and Chickadee

Owl and Chickadee are the best-known magazines for young people in Canada, with a combined circulation of 200,000. Owl is directed at children aged eight to twelve and its fledgling, Chickadee, to children four to eight.

Both Owl and Chickadee are gorgeous to look at. The publishing philosophy behind them is clear: this world is a wonderful place. If it is to survive, we need to learn to understand it and to love it. Owl and Chickadee entice readers far beyond the facts to the 'whys'. A horse has eyes set high on its head. Why? To see what's going on even during grazing.

The format is deliberately kept constant, the better to provide a backdrop to ever-new content. Owl contains a newspaper, Hoot, which can be used as a pattern for a classroom paper. Features include the Mighty Mites (adventurers who learn about the world by shrinking), Dr. Zed, and a mystifying back-page puzzle. Owl and Chickadee understand the reader's sense of humour, and are

well-stocked with plenty of groaners. Why is bread like the sun? It isn't light until it rises.

Subscription information for Owl (ISSN 03-8266-2-7) and Chickadee (ISSN 07-0746-1-1):

The Young Naturalist Foundation
59 Front Street East
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1B3

WHY CANADIAN?

Crackers, Jam, Owl and Chickadee are as good as, as exciting, and as attractive magazines as any you will find anywhere. They deserve attention on their merits, and not because of nationalistic fervour. No other magazine can give Canadian students the chance to read about themselves not as bystanders to someone else's culture, but as the central figures in their own culture. The hurdles to be overcome by every Canadian magazine are considerable: a small market spread over vast distances; heavy competition (National Geographic's magazine for children, National Geographic World, spends more than \$600,000 on promotion in Canada, more than the total budget of some Canadian publications!); and little benefit of advertising revenues are major and constant problems. Given a chance Canadian magazines can compete where it counts: quality, imagination, and challenge. They belong in our children's lives.

By the way, are bats the only animals that echolocate? To find out, pick up the March 1986 issue of Owl.

Epilogue to Chapter Five: For the Love of Language

Dinosaur-loving children can often spell (and say) words like 'diplodocus' with an ease and grace most adults find frightening. Other children know all the parts of an internal combustion engine; or the names of all the planets and stars; or the model names of all the cars in a traffic jam. These children often make adults feel sheepish and incompetent, especially when the same adults insist on teaching reading from controlled vocabulary books.

Don't underestimate the abilities of children. Or their curiosity. If there is something they want to read, they will, for the most part anyway. Reading is of course not quite that simple. It is a complex cognitive activity requiring a myriad of fine skills. But, regardless of complexities, interesting stories encourage reading. To put the case the other way--why bother to learn how to read if the words don't have anything to say?

Bruno Bettelheim tells a lovely story that illustrates the point. It is about a six-year old boy who attends both a Hebrew school and a secular school. In the Hebrew school the boy is required to translate Hebrew passages from the Old Testament into colloquial English. The Hebrew text is not abridged or simplified in any way.

The father of this six-year old wants to show off his son's skills to a guest. So he asks the guest to choose a chapter and verse for the child to translate. The guest asks for a passage from Genesis. The child reads the original and produces a creditable translation. Although the father hadn't realized it at first, the text he had given his son had a translation on the facing page. So the guest asks if the child used the printed translation. The father thinks not. He asks the child to read the English. The child fails. He reads like an ordinary six-year old in a grade one class--for whom Genesis would be considered too hard.

Bettelheim's tale tells the story. It is not that children can't read difficult stories. It is that they are not expected to. The boy in the Jewish school reads stories that connect him

with the grown-up world and with people who treat the words in the story with reverence. Impoverished stories are hardly likely to be treated with reverence. So to encourage children to read, make sure that the stories contain something worth reading.

The writers of the articles in this chapter all recommend reading out loud. Read stories to children--and to adults. That way you are seen to be reading and enjoying what you read. The children are engaged in the story and want to find out what happens next; that's important if they are going to read on their own. This is what it says on the subject in Education in the Primary and Junior Divisions:

The Junior Division has been identified as the golden age of reading. In some cases, if children are not hooked on reading at this age, they will not return to it as adults. This is the age at which children develop personal reading interests and they should be given time to read a wide selection of materials. They need to be free to read without continued checks and formal testing of comprehension and vocabulary.

To encourage independent reading follow Kathy Lowinger's advice: try magazines. Books are sensual and they are goods to be possessed. Make them important parts of life. Go to the bookstore and the library. Own books and read them.

No one can tell you what to read in class. You have to decide that based on your own interests and on the interests and skills of your class. But here are some clues about how to find appropriate books.

Listed below are two kinds of resource material. First there are books and articles containing information about reading and teaching reading. Then there is a list of up-to-date information about children's books--and reading theory. At the end is an additional list of resources that you will find of value.

It is worth your while to cultivate the interest of your teacher-librarian, your local public librarian and a neighbourhood bookseller. They read the trade magazines that describe and review new books--so they know which books are popular and why. Participate in formal (or informal) discussions about children's

books with your friends, colleagues--and children of your acquaintance; or offer to help evaluate books for your library or school board.

Chapter 5: The Right Book at the Right Time

Short Bibliography

This bibliography is about finding books for yourself. We haven't listed source material for children because each reference in this section has its own lists that will be more useful to you (however, if you are looking for Canadian children's magazines refer back to Kathy Lowinger's article).

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Landsberg, M. Michele Landsberg's Guide to Children's Literature. Markham: Penguin, 1985.

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Tucker, N. The Child and the Book: a Psychological and Literary Exploration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Waterland, L. Read With Me: An Apprenticeship Approach to Reading. Stroud: The Thimble Press, 1985.

Journals

Canadian Children's Literature
Post Office Box 335
Guelph, Ontario
N1H 6K5

Language Arts
Department of Elementary
Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5

Children's Literature in Education
111 - Eighth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10011

Emergency Librarian
Post Office Box 46258
Station 'G'
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6R 4G6

The Horn Book Magazine
Park Square Building
31st James Avenue
U.S.A.

Quill and Quire
56 The Esplanade
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1A7

Signal
The Thimble Press
South Woodchester
Stroud, Gloucestershire
England GL5 5EQ

The Web: Wonderfully
Exciting Books
The Reading Center
Ohio State University
200 Ramseyer Hall
Columbus, Ohio 43210

The Children's Book Centre lists the following bookstores
which specialize in children's literature.

The Frog Prince
205 Dunlog Street East
Barrie, Ontario
L4M 1B2

A Different Drummer Books
513 Locust Street
Burlington, Ontario
L7S 1V3

Little Crow's Book Room
239 Huron Street
Collingwood, Ontario
L9Y 3Z5

The Bookshelf Café
41 Quebec Street
Guelph, Ontario
N1H 2T1

Stories
177 Woolwich Street
Guelph, Ontario
N1H 3V4

The Children's Loft
The Book Cellar
144 St. James Street South
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 3A2

Books for Children
347 King Street East
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 3B5

The County Mouse Bookstore
567 Richmond Street
London, Ontario
N6A 3G2

The London Children's Book Shop
225 Queen's Avenue
London, Ontario
N6A 1J8

Oxford Book Shop
740 Richmond Street
London, Ontario
N6A 1L6

Oxford Book Shop
Eaton Square
Wellington Street
London, Ontario
N6A 3N7

Robert Holmes Ltd.
248 Dundas Street
London, Ontario
N6A 1H3

Bookcraft
183 Main Street South
P.O. Box 1051
Mount Forest, Ontario
N0G 2L0

Pick of the Crop Books
105 Dunn Street
Oakville, Ontario
L6J 3C9

Shirley Leishman Books
Lower Concourse
Westgate Shopping Centre
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Z 7L3

Oxford Book Shop
Festival Square
10 Downie Street
Stratford, Ontario
N5A 7K4

Sweet Thursday Bookshop
30 St. Paul Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7A 4S5

The Children's Book Store
604 Markham Street
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 2L8

Lindsay's Books for Children
101 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1P8

Storytale Lane
399 Roncesvalles Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6R 2N1

Tiddley Pom
43 Colborne Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1E3

The Toy Shop
62 Cumberland Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 1J5

Words Worth Books
88 King Street South
Waterloo, Ontario
N2J 1P5

Gulliver's Quality Children's
Books
953 Pinewood Road
North Bay, Ontario
P1B 4P2

The Bookery of Ottawa
541 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 6Z6

The Maple and the Butterfly
8 Spring Street
P.O. Box 91
St. Jacobs, Ontario
N0B 2N0

Children's Book Shop
1544 Regent Street South
Sudbury, Ontario
P3E 3Z6

The Albert Britnell Book Shop
765 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2G6

The Creative Child
47A Colborne Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1E3

Longhouse Bookshop
626 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 1Z8

The Story Tree
502 Eglinton Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario
M5N 1A5

The Toy Circus
2036 Queen Street East
Toronto, Ontario
M4L 1J1

Willoughby's Book Store
3441 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4N 2N1

Other Resources

Canadian Society of Children's Authors,
Illustrators and Performers (CANSCAIP)
Box 280, Station L
Toronto, Ontario
M6E 4Z2

Children's Book Centre
229 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1R4

Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
(or the centre in your area)
234 Eglinton Ave. E. Suite 207
416-484-1411
Toronto M4P 1K5

Ontario Puppetry Association
171 Avondale Avenue
Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 2V4

The League of Canadian Poets
24 Ryerson Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 2P3

Toronto Public Library
Osborne Collection (specializing in rare and out-of-print
children's literature) 416-593-5350
Spaced-Out (specializing in science fiction) 416-593-5351
40 St. George Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2E4

Storytellers' School of Toronto
412-A College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1T3

Prologue to Chapter Six: But What About Poetry?

What Is Poetry?

Lissa Paul

Poem As Car

Diane Dawber

At the Iowa Writers' Workshop (a famous creative writing school) they used to play a guessing-game called "Smoke". The person who was "it" would think of someone famous that the others in the group would likely know. There would be one initial clue. Pierre Trudeau (chosen randomly as an example) would be identified only as "a living Canadian".

The first question the group asks--"What kind of smoke are you?"--gives the game its name (and dates it--the game was played in the 50s). The person who is "it" has to say what kind of "smoke" Pierre Trudeau is (not the kind he would like, but the kind he would be): French cigarettes? Gitanes? Thin cigars?

The group continues to ask questions: "What kind of car are you?" "What weather?" "What animal?" "What flower?" "What computer?" "What building?" The possible variations provide wonderful "scope for the imagination" as Anne of Green Gables might say. Eventually, through collective, unconscious association of the metaphors (for that is what they are) the identity of the famous person emerges. If not, the group challenges the quality of the answers given by the person who was it.

"Smoke" is a game of metaphor-in-action, a dramatic way of illustrating just how powerful an image can be. And it is a demonstration of Archibald MacLeish's description of a poem: "A poem should not mean / But be" (Ars Poetica).

"Smoke" is the sort of game Diane Dawber might play in her classroom. Her personal, practical article, "Poem as Car", explores connections between poetry and the everyday world--instead of as something abstract and erudite. It does not relegate poetry to doggerel, pop songs or mnemonic. Poetry has a place in both high art and low art. As a teacher it is possible to make both forms visible to your students.

One of the first things to do when teaching poetry is to listen to the children in your class. Diane Dawber does. She notices that her students are intimately familiar with dragsters and she wants to make them just as familiar with poems. So she makes the language of poetry as comfortable and natural as the language of cars.

That brings up the second thing to do when teaching poetry--use the language of poetry to talk about poetry. Poetry is made up of an infinitely complex (and ultimately indefinable) distillation of elements: images made of intensely visible colours and shapes; textures you can feel; sounds that have a whole orchestra full of undertones; scents that come from gardens, garbage dumps and all kinds of place in between; and tastes somehow more exotic than ordinary ones. Words to describe what poetry is keep escaping. But because poetry is a living thing it is possible to keep trying to put sensual experience into words. Poets keep trying to put the world into words. As readers of poetry we have to keep trying to turn those words back into something we can feel. Familiarity with the language of poetry comes with practice and with exposure to a wide range of poems. It does not come from trying to hammer poems into holes.

Which brings up that last point. The teacher does not have to explain what poems mean, and it is all right to say so. In fact, it is preferable. To quote MacLeish again: "A poem should be equal to: / Not true".

The "meaning-of-the-poem" comes out of the vibrant resonance it sets up between words and world. Testing the powerfully charged world of poetry is something that teaches humanity more eloquently than any other form of human discourse. It is important to feel that--and share the sensibility. The pleasure of the poem comes from exploration not explanation, from the creation in the reader of a living organism that grows. And so to the first article: "What is Poetry"?

WHAT IS POETRY?

Lissa Paul

Half-way through the poem, Toby began to cry. She had been reading it aloud as part of her seminar presentation in my fourth year undergraduate children's literature class. We were all caught off guard by the intensity of her response. I have to confess that I've forgotten the poem, but I remember the moment; and I remember why the poem touched her (and us) so profoundly.

Toby had spoken to me a few days earlier about what she was going to do in her presentation. She wanted to talk about the way creativity is civilized out of children (she had been working with a child in whom she saw instinctive joy repressed), and she wanted to cite a poem she remembered--in a shadowy way--from her own schooldays. She knew the poem had something to do with the colour yellow--with why yellow was still her favourite colour. But she couldn't remember the poem or the author. So she called her mother (long-distance) to explain the situation and see if her mother could locate the book in which Toby knew the poem to be.

Her mother had been unaware that the poem had been so important. When she found it, the clues to its significance came to light. Toby told us that her mother had said that Toby's nursery school paintings had always been instantly recognizable: exuberant, bold, filled with sunlight. But when Toby started school her drawings lost their individual vitality--and they became of a piece with those of the other children. Her mother could no longer recognize them.

So there it was. Creativity civilized out. And the enormity of the whole situation was revealed to Toby through the poem--in a way so immediate and so powerful that it touched us all. For that moment we were all in utter accord with her.

I've been thinking about Toby, and about what happened that day in class, as I've been trying to write this article on poetry. And I've been thinking about basic questions about the value of poetry. Questions like: "Why read poetry?" "Or write it?" "Or study it?"--questions that, on the face of it, look naïve or silly, especially in a book about children's literature (it occurs

to me that Northrop Frye asks similar questions about the value of literature in The Educated Imagination).

I know why I read poetry. The language of poetry often creates for me a kind of magical explosion, and sets off a range of responses from joy to wonder to fear to pain--to everything in between. Poetry is very much part of my sense of what it is to be human, to share in a community of emotional response. But how is it possible to communicate that sense to anyone else? Toby's story, I hope, gives you at least a shadow of how poetry can touch our most hidden and forgotten places, our human places. That's why I've decided to focus this article on the human truth in poetry.

What follows is something like a personal journey into the inscape of poetry. Ted Hughes, poet laureate, is the guide. For two reasons: he has had the most profound effect on my response to imaginative literature; and one of his books, Poetry in the Making, is, to my mind, one of the most attractive, readable, practical books available on reading and writing poetry. Originally prepared and read by Hughes for a series of BBC radio broadcasts for schools, the text retains the oral quality of the original--the living voice of a practicing poet, talking seriously and without condescension, about what he does and why.

Poems, says Ted Hughes, "have their own life, like animals" and "they have a certain wisdom. They know something special . . . something perhaps which we are very curious to learn". That is how he begins Poetry in the Making. And when he talks about making a poem come to life, he uses no thorny technical or theoretical language. He says, simply, that poems are "an assembly of living parts moved by a single spirit. The living parts are the words, the images, the rhythms. The spirit is the life which inhabits them when they all work together". That's all. Then he explains how to do that:

Words that live are those which we hear, like "click" or "chuckle", or which we see, like "freckled" or "veined", or which we taste, like "vinegar" or "sugar", or touch, like "prickle" or "oily", or smell, like "tar" or "onion". Words which belong directly to one of the five senses.

Or words which act and seem to use their muscles,
like "flick" or "balance".¹

When Ted Hughes tells it, it sounds easy enough. Just "imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it . . . Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn yourself into it . . . You keep your eyes, your ears, your nose, your taste, your touch, your whole being on the thing you are turning into words".² The problem is that most of us can't keep up that kind of concentration. Besides, we're usually so repressed that we opt for the familiar and the conventional responses, right answers instead of true ones.

But children and real poets have an advantage. Their responses to the world are less conditioned, more fluid than our grown-up ones usually are. So when you are talking about poetry with children, or when you write it with them, the trick is to open up, not close down, possible ways of experiencing the world. And that is one of the things poetry is--about looking at the world around us, experiencing it so clearly and acutely that we connect it instantly, with emotional response, then look out again at the world with new eyes.

Ted Hughes often does that, makes things that I don't really see come to life in unexpected ways. In his most recent book for children, What is the Truth?: A Farmyard Fable for the Young, the rightness of his vision often catches me with something like a sense of shock. Here is Hughes on cows:

1. T. Hughes, Poetry in the Making (London: Faber, 1969), p. 17.

2. Hughes, p. 18.

I think

There's a summer ocean liner in cows--
Majestic and far off.
With a quiet mysterious delight, Fading through the
blue afternoon.

And there's a ruined holy city
In a herd of lying down, cud-chewing cows--
Noses raised, eyes nearly closed
They are fragments of temples--even their outlines
Still at an angle unearthly.³

It never would have occurred to me to see cows as ocean liners, or as "a ruined holy city". But Hughes identifies--sees--something in cows that had not been visible until he brought it to my attention. And I'll think of these lines the next time I see cows--and think about cows with more respect too. I'll see something beyond the random marks in a field, glanced and forgotten, as I go tearing down the 401 highway.

But how to put that knowledge into the classroom? Reading first. The chances are that if you choose a poem to talk about in class, which has the sensual qualities Hughes talks about, a poem that can be seen, touched, tasted, smelled and/or heard, it will be a poem the children can accommodate.

Now writing. Poetry is about making--in fact that is the original meaning of the word (so the title of Hughes' book is particularly apt). And in Poetry in the Making, he talks about doing just that--making poems.

Hughes suggests you choose an object or an animal, or something of interest to you and your class. First focus on it. Then write it--as quickly and spontaneously as you can. Set a time limit (he recommends ten minutes). The only rule is that each fresh thought gets a new line. In my own experience, it is best if you, as teacher, write with the students, under the same conditions. Share your work with them as they share theirs with you. And don't be too surprised if they write better poetry, that is, more visceral, less conditioned, less artificial and self-conscious poetry. One of my own undergraduate students (who

3. T. Hughes, What Is The Truth?: A Farmyard Fable For The Young (London: Faber, 1984), unpagged.

taught grade three) tried it with her class and she told me a lovely story about what the children taught her.

They all wrote animal poems. Beverly (my student, their teacher) confessed to the class when they had finished that she wasn't very happy with the beginning of her poem, that she had tried to restart it several times to get it right, but it didn't seem to get any better. The students sympathized. But they explained that when they had the same problem, they just brought the animal they were trying to write back into their minds. Then wrote from the picture. Beverly understood. The children, of course, got it right. While she had been trying to write in an orderly fashion, by getting the words to order themselves correctly, the children simply went back to the source and made the picture speak. A good lesson--for poets and teachers and children.

The children in Beverly's class taught her about looking beyond words to the thing itself. That has a lot to do with addressing the question of what poetry is. In a letter to me Hughes says that poetry "is simply the name we give to a certain kind of writing. The closer that kind of writing gets to a total (instantaneous) release--something that satisfies & reinforces & appeases the whole organism--the more intense, as poetry, it seems to be".⁴ He is talking about poetry in absolutely physical terms: words that change the way we experience the world.

Elsewhere, alluding to Job talking with God, Hughes talks about poetry as being powerful enough to make his hair stand on end. Other poets share his sense of the physical power of poetry to disturb us. Wordsworth talks about poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity". And here is Emily Dickinson: "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that it is poetry".

4. T. Hughes, Unpublished letter from Ted Hughes to Lissa Paul. Undated. Received 1 May 1984. © 1984, 1986.

For poets, then, words make experience of the outside world resonate emotionally, internally. About Poetry in the Making, Hughes says (again from his letter) that he wanted "to direct readers (listeners) towards certain faculties--inner concentration, inner listening . . . A deliberate sort of self-exposure to an event--an inner event". What he means is that by making the outside come alive, the inner world of emotion, of humanity, does too. It is what Blake calls "the human form divine".

If my description of poetry sounds more like magic than Language Arts, there is good reason. In other times, in other places, poets were magical people, central to the life-blood of the community. Shamans and medicine men knew the secret names, the true names of all things and all people, and possessed power over them. Medieval heroic poets were the keepers of all the social codes and genealogies of the community. Sufi poets could cure the sick by finding the right stories to speak to the patient's illness. Words had and to some extent, even in our society, still have the power to charm, to cast spells. Even though poetry isn't that essential to our high-tech mind-sets anymore, traces of that power linger. Just listen to children in a playground swearing to keep a secret. They use poetry, and they respect the power of words--even if they don't exactly believe in it.

Now, despite the rather mystical tone of this discussion of words coming to life, I'm not abandoning the need to know about (the often ancient and ritualistic) formal structures. I'm saying that a skilled poet knows how to use them to make his words live. And a skilled reader who knows how to see and understand those structures knows the reason why the poem is alive. There is power in the possession of knowledge. For instance, in "Do not go gentle into that good night" by Dylan Thomas, the refrain lines ring with taut rage throughout the poem--as if trapped, ringing against the bars of a cage. But how does Thomas make you feel that rage? Well, he sets the poem as a villanelle, and the refrain lines themselves say and shape the felt rage. One set of the refrain lines, "Do not go gentle into that good night" (1, 6, 12 and 18) ricochet off the other set, "Rage, rage against the

dying of the light" (3, 9, 15 and 19)--all in the tight compass of the nineteen-line poem.⁵

In the same way, if you see a poem that begins, "There was an old person of Dean / Who dined on one pea, and one bean", you can be reasonably sure that the rest of the poem is going to be funny. You actually know, just from those two lines, that it will probably be nonsense: a limerick. And you recognize that fact because you recognize the rhythm and rhyme scheme of the poem as the kind used in nonsense verse. In this case the poem is by that master of nonsense, Edward Lear, and it concludes, impenetrably enough: "For he said, 'More than that / Would make me too fat,' / That cautious old person of Dean".⁶

So you see, structures and shapes can convey something of the meaning and feeling in poems, and discussions about structure don't have to be boring and disconnected from sense. Neither do other formal aspects of poetry. Like metaphors. Hughes talks about metaphor in Poetry in the Making (without focusing on "like" or "as"). He says simply that:

A comparison is like a little puzzle . . . You are forced to look more closely, and to think, and make distinctions, and be surprised at what you find--and all this adds to the strength and vividness of your final impression. And it all happens in a flash.

A metaphor forces the imagination (of both the reader and the writer) into action, to make connections between things. As in the example I gave right at the beginning, when Ted Hughes makes me think about the cows as "ocean liners" and "temples".

5. D. Thomas, "Do not go gentle into that good night", in The Rattle Bag. Ed. by T. Hughes and S. Heaney (London: Faber, 1982). pp. 131-2.

6. E. Lear, "There was an old person of Dean", in Oxford Book of Poetry for Children. Comp. by E. Blishen (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1984), p. 11.

7. Hughes, Poetry in the Making, p. 44.

Writing and reading poetry is about exploring what it is to be human. To do that the writer focuses on the world in which he or she lives and trusts that the right words surface. In his letter to me Hughes says that in Poetry in the Making, he was not saying "'study writing,' but 'practice writing', as diving to depths has to be practiced. The whole business closer to athletics than aesthetics, perhaps". And it is with those very physical terms that Hughes speaks about what writing is and what it does. A poem is alive if all the senses of writer and reader are alert.

But why expose children to poetry, or any form of imaginative literature? Because, as Northrop Frye says in The Educated Imagination, it allows them (and us) a glimpse of what is "imaginatively possible",⁸ a better and a worse world. It is a human world, not a world that can be quantified in rigid terms. The same sentiments are shared in Poetry in the Making. Hughes says that poetry is a way that man struggles "to possess his own experience, in other words to regain his genuine self". Words are the way we do that. This is how Hughes concludes:

Words that will express something of the deep complexity that makes us precisely the way we are, from the momentary effect of the barometer to the force that created men distinct from trees. Something of the inaudible music that moves us along in our bodies from moment to moment like water in a river. Something of the spirit of the snowflake in the water of the river. Something of the duplicity and the relativity and the merely fleeting quality of all this. Something of the almighty importance of it and something of the utter meaninglessness. And when words can manage something of this, and manage it in a moment of time, and in that same moment make out of it all the vital signature of a human being--not of an atom, or of a geometrical diagram, or of a heap of lenses--but a human being, we call it poetry.

That's what poetry is--for me anyway, today.

8. N. Frye, The Educated Imagination (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1963).

9. Hughes, Poetry in the Making, p. 124.

POEM AS CAR

Diane Dawber

Danny looked up from his drawing as I passed. He smiled. I smiled back and stopped to admire the fantastic dragster in his picture. If only Danny could feel as comfortable with poems as he could with dragsters!

As I went on to other students, an idea, well, really just a phrase, began to repeat in my head. "Poem as car, poem as car . . .". It wouldn't go away.

It usually pays to examine the images that come to us at odd moments. So I did. Poem as car? Hmmm. If poems were as familiar as lunchtime traffic, as exciting as a Grand Prix race and at least as understandable as the internal combustion engine, then maybe Danny would be writing dragster poems to go with his dragster pictures.

Why do children draw cars? One reason might be that they are so familiar, and so associated with what adults do. I set out to make poems as familiar as the automobile, at least as far as I was able.

The first thing you will see upon entering my classroom, or even before you get there, are displays of poems. Walls, bulletin boards, chart stands, windows, cupboard doors may have poems attached to them. If it's Hallowe'en there may be spooky or pumpkin poems. If someone has lost a tooth or a friend, there may be lost tooth or friend poems. If it's the first bright day of spring, there are poems about that too. Studying simple machines or long division. No problem:

There once was a large scary bully
Who made everyone's muscles feel woolly.
A small lad with a rope
Showed that he was no dope
As he hauled up the brute with a pulley.

or

Oh pity the poor dividend
Attacked by divisors who rend.

When he's cut up in pieces
The division then ceases
And the quotient numbers stretchers to send.

Poems help us out. They may not be great poems, only verses with catchy rhymes or silly images but they're there to see. Simple machines and long division have never seemed the same.

Sometimes you can find posters with the poem appropriate to your need, or a calendar with poem and illustration but it doesn't take much more effort to copy a poem onto a chart paper and pull out a picture from your file to go with it. Of course, if you have calligraphic or artistic talents, so much the better. I am no artist but my students enjoyed simple cartoons in marker to go with the limericks above.

If you're pressed for time--what teacher isn't--before long your students will be wanting to take copying and illustrating jobs from you. All you will have to do is referee turns and keep materials on hand.

If you and your students are going to be able to find suitable poems, it is necessary to have lots of sources on hand. The shelf of books for silent reading can contain anthologies of work by many different, or by single, authors. There can be songbooks or sheet music. Hymnbooks too. By the record player there may be a collection of albums which carry the words to the songs. A box of old greeting cards and cutouts of advertisements provide verses, whatever we think of their literary quality and the commercial degradation of art. What we are trying to show is that poetry crops up in many places in the world, not just in school, not just in a class in literature.

The sneaky part comes next. It's great to have poetry displayed in your own classroom but that still doesn't prove that poetry is acceptable in the whole wide world outside of school. What we have to do is spread it around. We've sent a poem to the principal about the standardized tests we had just finished. It had a lot in it about seeing dots before our eyes. He put it up in his office.

We sent a poem to the secretary about the downpour on the first day of school that happened right at lunchtime dismissal and caused traffic jams. She hung it up too.

The chiropractor who visited to tell us about bones and muscles now has a poem in his waiting room too. So does the store on the Tyendinaga Reserve where we went to spend the day.

The visiting percussion group who came to perform went away with a poem about their drums. Another teacher who let us go on a hike in his woods has a poem about some very strange and mysterious creatures we just might have met there. We might have to send a poem to the class in Africa who are going to be our penpals. If only we had thought to send one to Marc Garneau, our poetry could have gone even further.

Poems to look at are only so involving. Like the car in the auto museum or dealer's showroom, there is only so much you can learn about it. To learn more you have to test drive it.

There are disagreements about the models that should be test-driven. All I can say is that I would not expect the new driver to take out the most valuable antique in the museum or the most expensive racing-car available. He might get home safely; then again, he might not. I would go for a good reliable, easy-to-handle, rather inexpensive model. It won't go too fast for the driver's experience, there aren't a lot of gadgets to worry about and a small bump or scratch is not going to mean the end of the world. The new drivers should be, and probably are, aware of the museum and racing varieties but no need to pile on the pressure when steering and going sixty kilometres an hour are plenty thrill enough.

Poems written for children within the last ten years should probably be relevant and if the anthology is for children one would hope that the selection is sound. Read it yourself. If you don't understand the poems, chances are that many of your young people won't either.

Analogies are never exact but the poem as car puts the debate over giving classics to the very inexperienced in a reasonable light. All sorts of poetry should be made available, including the classics, but I don't expect students to really understand or enjoy them without having had much experience with simpler models first.

To test drive a poem we have done many things. I have recited a favourite poem to the class or read it to them. The

presentation may be casual or complete with props or costumes. The students have brought in poems, sometimes memorized, sometimes read, to present at sharing time, on special occasions or just before recess. If possible, it is fascinating to invite a poet, songwriter or advertising writer to come in to read or recite favourite or original works to the class. If that is not possible, the listening centre may contain tapes of poetry being read. There are many excellent tapes and records available. Or why not have tapes of yourself or your students reading a favourite, prepared poem? There are endless possibilities.

Another way of involving students in poetry is to let them manage the displays or centres in the room. Many students are studying calligraphy these days and what better way to use their talents than copying poems for all of us to enjoy? This is a good chance for illustration too. You have probably had students who were much better artists than we can hope to be. Once students are encouraged to find appropriate poems, they will come up with many treasures. You will be surprised to find how many have a parent, aunt, uncle or cousin who writes, and has published poetry. You will also be surprised to find how many families have favourite poems that have been shared for generations.

Up until now I have skirted the subject of writing poetry. Writing poetry is a lot like building and repairing cars. It scares some people to death. There are many brave souls who aren't afraid but that is no help to those who are. It's important. Important because to really know poetry one must get into the mechanics of it.

Think of it this way. Are there many children who are afraid to build a soapbox car? Not on your life! It doesn't even have to have wheels to let the child have hours of fun whizzing down imaginary roads.

Writing poetry is a lot like that. You don't have to come up with a masterpiece on your first attempt. Much has been made of computers teaching us that it is not a disaster to make a mistake. One just has to go back and try to correct or debug it. The same with poetry. A poet would be petrified with fright if he thought that the next words written down would be famous for generations. A poet writes and writes and out of it all may come

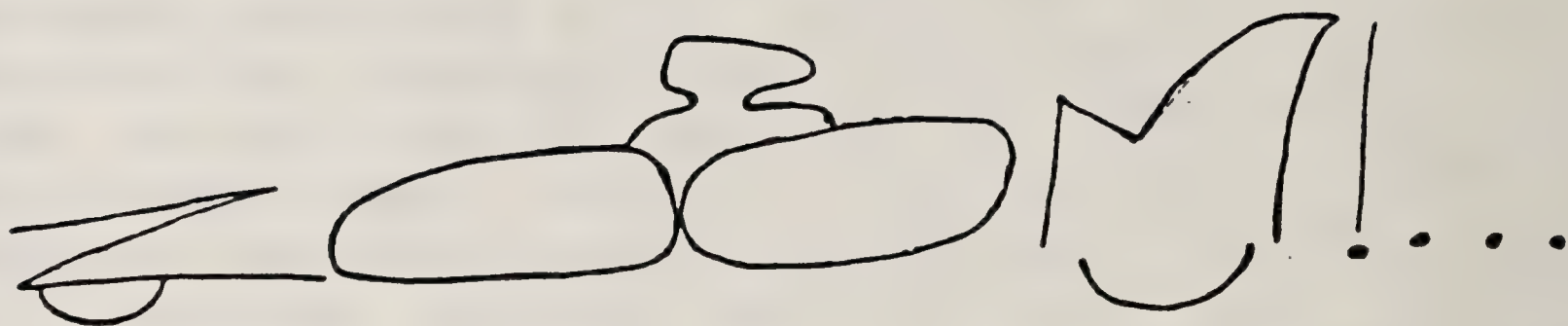
a few lines worth keeping for posterity, maybe not. The point is to do it or there is no chance at all.

The student can learn a lot just by watching you try. Take the chalk and work on a limerick, or a funny couplet, about something that has just happened. The others can be doing some reading or their own writing. If you start to feel comfortable, let them ask questions or make suggestions. Use the overhead projector another day, chart paper the next. Get the group to compose a thank you verse for a visitor. Donald Graves' writing contains many suggestions with examples about ways these things can be done. There is no one right way, just lots of good possibilities.

You have probably been asking yourself, as I have many times, what kinds of language you should use in talking about poems. Some teachers teach all the sophisticated vocabulary from Trochaic trimetre on down. Others teach none. The truth lies somewhere in between. Just as some of us can just about ask to have the gas tank filled, the oil checked and the windshield cleaned on our cars and others may be able to discuss compression ratios and torque conversions with ease, so some of us can talk about poetry in simple terms or complicated ones. Most of us can talk about the image and the rhythm and the connections to life that we see in a poem but few will go on to a technical discussion of the language and meaning constructions. In any poem it is a great deal to talk about the picture, the sound and the relation to our own experience. Sometimes when you are writing a poem it becomes necessary to identify what is producing the effect or blocking it and more technical terms may be used. The mechanic needs to know about the tie rod ends but we may only need to know that the steering seems off.

The most fun I have had from thinking of the poem as car is thinking of the models which some of my favourite poets might write. Can you think of Al Purdy in a "57 Chev" of a poem? Or Dennis Lee in a bright yellow Volkswagen from which innumerable clowns can emerge? Or Margaret Atwood in an air-conditioned compact? T. S. Eliot is surely a well-used Bentley. I'm sure you can go on or add your own interpretations.

The supreme success, as far as I am concerned is this
dragster poem.



by Danny

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Epilogue to Chapter Six: Poetry as something you want to do--not something you have to do

Because the articles offer many practical ways of putting poetry into classrooms, only the basic tenets need restatement here. They are really quite simple. Begin by making poetry a part of life--your life, the life of the classroom, everyday life. Be aware that poetry belongs to high culture and popular culture.

Have the children in your class bring in poems they like. As teacher you ought to buy books of poetry, borrow them from the library, and subscribe to, or at least read, a journal that publishes poetry. (There are lots of small Canadian literary magazines that suit: Canadian Literature, Open Letter, Poetry Toronto, Canadian Forum. They are in some bookstores and libraries. You can call the Canadian Periodical Association for a list. Read poetry and be seen to read poetry (this is the same advice we have been giving throughout and it holds true). Encourage the children in your class to bring in poems that please them. Bring in poems you like. Poems you want to share. There is no point in bringing in something you don't like. Be able to acknowledge puzzlement. If you don't understand something, say so. The children in your class might be able to help.

On the assumption that you and your students are comfortable enough to talk about poetry, you ought to write it as well as read it. In struggling with the problems of composition readers are put in touch with writers. We are really back to the importance of revision here. Writing is serious: the right words/images/rhythms/metaphors/verse forms are important. Don't be afraid to encourage your students to revise their work, but be sensitive to the fact that you are supposed to be nurturing writers--not stunting their growth. Focus on success rather than failure. The process has something in common with growing a good lawn. By encouraging the grass you can crowd out the crabgrass and the weeds.

Words are important. They have histories, geographies, ancestries, pedigrees, rhythms and tonalities. Treat them with

respect. Remember that it is important that children are not frightened or put off by words they don't know. As a teacher, it is possible for you to help them learn to delight in new words, to enjoy the taste of them, to feel triumphant in the possession of them.

The kinds of exercises I've been suggesting take the meanings of words into account. But words also have aural and visual qualities. To explore the aural qualities, try sound poetry. In-class projects could range from single sound chants (like the mantra "om") to whole stories told in a language the children make up themselves. How would a primitive person, someone without formal language, convey a complex set of ideas or instructions to a group? For example, how would you tell a group of hunters that there is a giant mammoth lurking in the woods? And that if they sneak up behind it and throw a spear at its heart they can eat mammoth steaks for dinner?

What does a landscape sound like? Do sounds have pictures? What do they look like? If you can you might try to find a recording of sound poets. "The Four Horsemen" are a Canadian group with a number of records to their credit. Or you might try to find a recording of Eskimo throat singers.

Now to poems as pictures. Meanings of poems come from their shapes as well as their sounds. To focus on shape, try concrete poems. Poets like b. p. nichol are very conscious of the physical dimensions of words. They often play out a single word in a variety of shapes and sizes. You might try this concrete poem by Earle Birney.


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e      .      e
i      t      e
d      h      n
o b     e     e s
      m     o
      e i b s t
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      d f o m o s q
          T E
          O B

a r c s f i n g
t      .      e
c      .      r
h      .      s
e      .      o
d      .      f
t y b      p o e t
h      r
e      y

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Metaphor can be approached in two ways. You can use the "smoke" approach, as outlined in the introduction to this section. Or you might try riddle poems. Riddles usually work on the same principle as metaphors--you have to be able to see two different things at once. They are rather like "smoke" in reverse: a series of metaphors gradually builds into a picture. There are some examples in the Puffin nursery rhyme collections. This is a riddle poem we like:

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Insubstantial I can fill lives,
Cathedrals, worlds
I can haunt islands,
Raise passions
Or calm the madness of kings.
I've even fed the affectionate.
I can't be touched or seen.
But I can be noted.

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The answer, in case you haven't guessed, is music. The poem is one of a set of riddle poems by John Cotton (Times Literary Supplement, July 24, 1981). Your students can probably provide you with similar examples. Reading and writing poetry help develop the same sets of skills we have been stressing--attention

to the words on the page, to what the author says, to what the reader sees, attention to detail, to the art and craft of selection, and to pride in something one makes. With skill, luck, effort, and good will it might just be possible to turn out a generation of poetry readers and writers.

Chapter 6: Poetry

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Prologue to Chapter Seven

Identifying books to take to class

Canadian Novels in the Junior Classroom
Joan McGrath

Our Own Words and The Words of Others
(Part II)

David Booth and
Larry Swartz

Although this is the last section, it is really about one of the first problems. Before you can talk about stories with children, you have to decide what books to choose. In some ways stories are like mirrors. They reflect images of what we are and how we live. So it is important to choose stories that bring our own culture into focus, especially for children who are trying to figure out who they are and where they belong in the world.

"Canadian Novels in the Junior Classroom", by Joan McGrath, shows how to fit stories to individual needs. She makes the case that stories transform abstract information into something we can relate to. For example, Joy Kogawa's Obasan jolts the sterile fact--that the Canadian government interned Japanese-Canadians in the 1940s--into an emotionally and intellectually charged story. As Joan McGrath says in her article, the story allows the students to "share the experiences suffered by the young heroine of Obasan", and so share in the knowledge of the injustice "suffered by Japanese-Canadians during World War II". It is an interesting example on another count. It is not addressed to any particular age-group. It is simply a very powerful and moving story.

"The Words of Others," a discussion between David Booth and teacher Larry Swartz, is about how to transform children learning to read into children reading to learn. Swartz sets aside time in class for reading to the class and for silent reading. He brings writers into the school when he can (information about how to do that is listed in the bibliography). He encourages the children to keep a journal of what they read, and he reads on his own time. The underlying intent of a programme like his is to show new readers that reading is, in and of itself, a rewarding activity. It sounds obvious. But there are few (if any)

characters in the older basal readers who are actually shown doing any reading.

Books aren't just objects that belong to the world of school. Children will take responsibility and pride of possession in stories they can make their own, so have as many books in the classroom as possible. To do that you might collect (and contribute) money to a class book-buying fund. The whole class could then troop down to the local bookstore or bookfair to choose and buy their own books. There is an elegant brilliance to this approach. The children develop a sense of trust in their own taste and a sense of the value of books.

CANADIAN NOVELS IN THE JUNIOR CLASSROOM

Joan McGrath

All Canadian school children should be reading Canadian literature. It is difficult to imagine anyone thinking it necessary to suggest that British children should read British children's books, or that American children should be exposed to American children's literature from time to time, under the assumption that no-one need make so obvious a comment; some things, surely, may be taken for granted.

The very different situation here is complicated by our relationship with these two great producers of excellent work for children. Canada, a relative newcomer in the field, is sandwiched between two friendly giants both producing a wealth of very tempting and attractive material for children, almost all of it in one of our two official languages, competitively priced, and marketed with the skill of experience.

Because these two great nations have long-established, specialized publishing houses, they have long been better equipped than Canada to produce handsome books; many of the imports from Britain and the United States are things of charm and beauty. Nevertheless, however attractive Canadian educators may find the glossy delights offered by foreign publishers, it is crucial that they bear other considerations in mind when they come to buy.

Firstly, and beyond argument, it is important that Canadian children be made aware of their own proud land and its heritage. "Made" rather than "kept", for Canadian teachers must cope with the confusion of children who refer to "Our President", or who believe that their nation's capital is to be found in Washington, D. C.; many senior students know a great deal more about the politics and personalities south of the border than they do of what is taking place in their own country. The culture of the United States is, after all, what they have absorbed through endless hours of television.

What other nation allows its children to hear the praises of other countries endlessly reiterated without ensuring that they are first made aware of the beauty of their own homeland? Generations of school children grew up in the Arthur Ransome

tradition of Swallows and Amazons, awed by the wonders of England's Lake Country, while knowing nothing of the unrivalled beauty of Canada's own landscape.

In times past teachers had some excuse for bypassing Canadian literature in favour of more glamorous stuff. Of such sparse Canadiana as was to be found (apart from the immortal Anne of Green Gables) almost all had to do with wild animals and snowy wastes. Excellent of their kind, but not to everyone's taste; few such materials as would encourage beginning readers, or would keep junior graders enthralled with the printed word. Poor as was the selection for junior readers, the primary selection was even worse. The most Canada-conscious of teachers had nowhere to turn for assistance.

Now, happily, all that has changed. Several thriving new Canadian publishing houses are busy producing a wealth of excellent books for children, and are finding and promoting Canadian authors whose work appeals to youngsters at all levels of sophistication.

How often are teachers told and reminded in all subject areas to "Begin where the students are, and build from there"? Well, where Canadian students are is in Canada. Canadian towns, cities and countryside have their own distinctive flavour, which is not identical with that of the United States, quite apart from such details as police uniforms, flags, and the shapes of postboxes. Children feel secure with whatever is familiar to them. They face quite enough novelty in leaving home for part of the day for the first time, beginning school, and learning to read, without tackling other unnecessarily unfamiliar concepts at the same time.

Now, with Canadian school curricula strongly weighted in favour of Canadian content, Canadian novels for young people are a splendid tool with which to flesh out the bare factual bones of such courses as social studies, history, man in society, geography and natural science. It is a safe wager that more students learn and retain more information about the Arctic through reading the work of Farley Mowat, than ever do so through the most exacting and exhaustive chart and chalk lessons ever devised. Why?

Because the adventurous young heroes of his novels are personalities with whom young readers can identify.

Farley Mowat's Lost in the Barrens has made an entire all-but-unexplored part of the country very real and vivid to thousands of students who themselves may never visit the Arctic. They become absorbed in the adventures of Jamie and Awasin, sharing their perils and triumphs, while painlessly benefitting from a good deal of meticulously-researched detail about survival in the Arctic. Even if these youngsters never set foot in the North, they have shared vicariously in an Arctic experience they will never forget.

Only Canadian literature can be expected, or trusted, to address specifically Canadian themes and issues. While American literature, for example, is rich in stories of its War of Independence, only in Canadian works is the plight of the Loyalists who left what was no longer their home to come to Canada likely to be a prime concern. Our children must be made aware of the Canadian perspective of the events of the War of 1812 and its cloudy conclusion. They need to read the Canadian version of the stories of those hardy souls who pioneered, rather than receiving the impressions of those who wrote, usually from a safe and comfortable distance, of the rough-spoken colonials abroad; they deserve to hear the tales of Canada's own Native Peoples as told by the original storytellers, not clumsily interpreted by outsiders.

We as Canadians have much to be proud of, and some things to regret most bitterly. It is important that our students realize and share both the pride of a nation that waged righteous war, and the determination that injustice such as that suffered by Japanese-Canadians during World War II shall never repeated; as they will determine, if they share the experiences suffered by the young heroine of Obasan. Where it is possible to maintain a philosophical detachment concerning the fate of a mass of unknown people, one shares the feelings of a single, known person. Those shared feelings must surely have an effect upon one's thinking, and one's behaviour, in the future.

If we are indeed, as we so often advocate, attempting to build a national identity, a shared Canadian children's literature

is the ideal place to make a start. Expo '67 demonstrated conclusively the power of a shared experience to contribute to a sense of oneness and community; Expo belonged to all of Canada, and all of us were proud. A shared literature of childhood can be a part of just such a unifying movement. Reading and hearing about other Canadian youngsters, learning to care about them, helps children to feel that they too have a place, a stake, in their own country.

Most of the youngsters in our schools, like all too many of their parents and teachers, have at best a narrowly regional view of Canada, which is not too surprising considering its vastness. If for this reason alone, it is of particular importance that youngsters should be introduced, at an early and impressionable age, to the realities and richness of life in a multicultural and multi-racial nation. Canadians are a far-flung people, thinly spread over an enormous and challenging country. A child whose home is in a crowded apartment block in a metropolis may well find it difficult to realize a kinship with other, hypothetical children who live in lonely cabins on the edge of the habitable land; but that same child will have no problem whatsoever in reaching out in sympathy to Mary of Mile 18. She is real, human, child-size; and her dilemma is comprehensible.

Conversely, a child living on a remote reserve may find the concept of crowded urban life difficult to encompass, yet will be in full sympathy with the troubled urban children coping with The Minerva Program. It's all a matter of scale.

All of us, but children in particular, tend to fear and distrust the unknown. It makes excellent sense, therefore, to break down the barriers of strangeness that cause so much unnecessary friction among our peoples. Depending upon the circumstances of their lives, some of our children may seldom or never have occasion to meet anyone very different from themselves in racial origin, religious persuasion, or socio-economic status. Obviously it is neither possible nor advisable to mix and meld all the youngsters in all our schools; but they can meet one another, if only at a remove, in our country's own literature.

It is possible for a child to know and to care about a fictional character, human or even animal, with deep and sincere

feeling. No one could doubt this who had heard children speculating and sharing their hopes for the future lives of Liza and Julilly, the girls who fled from slavery to freedom in Underground To Canada. They have become more real than mere reality.

Child readers, even more than their elders, like to be able to identify with the characters in the stories they read. They enjoy reading about children of their own ages, engaged perhaps in unlikely exploits, but recognizably akin to themselves; and they like to be able to identify with the settings of at least some of the stories they read; not always to strain to visualize foreign settings as though only elsewhere, impossibly far away, could adventure take place. Where once Canadian children had almost no representation on the map of childhood literature, increasingly they are becoming ambassadors of goodwill both at home and abroad, where through international book fairs and the like, the "unknown country" is at last coming into its own.

Lastly, and best of all reasons for reading Canadiana, is the fact that there is an ever-increasing array of good books, written expressly, though not exclusively, for the use and interest of Canadian children. Buy, read, and recommend their very own literature to Canadian children. Doing so serves the national as well as the educational interest, and makes just plain good sense.

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OUR OWN WORDS AND THE WORDS OF OTHERS
PART TWO

David Booth & Larry Swartz

In the junior programmes, grades 4, 5 and 6, we have the children experiencing wide reading activities and wide writing activities. Much of the work can be individualized and much of the work can be based on personalized reading. In Larry Swartz's programme there is a lot of shared reading, listening, and writing time.

D.B. When you read your collection of stories, novels, poems and articles and share pictures from picture books, what do you hope the children will gain?

L.S. I hope that by reading aloud to the children that they will have some image in their minds of what the literature has done, something that they can relate to in the story: to the characters; or to the conflict; or to the issues in the story.

D.B. What do you hope all the children will take from the discussion that follows?

L.S. I like them to respond to the characters, or decide on some alternative solutions, so that when they write, they will perhaps explore a different point of view.

D.B. You use picture books in the junior grades?

L.S. The picture book is concise. I can read it in a short space of time and then develop it for a long period of time, a day or a week.

D.B. So it becomes a vehicle for shared listening and viewing. Do they chant, join in, read along with you?

L.S. If some books have a pattern I have them join in with me. Sometimes it could be a poem that we could share together or they could work together with a partner or a small group.

D.B. How much of your work is individualized? When do they read their own choice of material?

L.S. They make their choices in what they read each day. If it's not a novel I have a selection of

picture books in the classroom. If they want to read a magazine then they may do so.

D.B. You allow them to read any magazine they want to as opposed to a quality novel?

L.S. I prefer that they read a novel, and they do read the novels. Once I make them feel that, they tend to choose the novel.

D.B. What about those students who just won't read?

L.S. I either let them read a short story or choose a book that they want. They can go to the library and look at non-fiction materials. If they want to read a book about hockey during the reading time, they may read a book about hockey.

D.B. What do they do with the books they read?

L.S. When they finish it they conference with me and tell me something they've enjoyed about the book.

D.B. Do they ever share with the class books they've read?

L.S. Yes, they share a great deal. After reading time, I might say, "Who is reading something good today? Would you like to tell us about it"?

D.B. Do you read the whole novel aloud?

L.S. Generally I read parts of the novel.

D.B. How many novels would you read aloud during the year?

L.S. Twenty.

D.B. So you read one every other week, basically? What sorts of drama do you do from novels?

L.S. One of the most successful ways to get them into the novel occurs when they become the character and where they interview each other in role. They probe each other about the story. They become the character. Through role-playing they understand the problems that the character or characters in the story might have.

D.B. Do you ever do a book that isn't related to a theme?

L.S. Yes. I might say, "I just found a wonderful book I want to share. I want your opinion."

- D.B. Do you read the book right through or stop in the middle?
- L.S. Often I stop in the middle, particularly when I'm working on a new drama, to find out what they are thinking. I sometimes don't get to the end of the picture book.
- D.B. There are, in your classroom then, basically, a private and public kind of reading and book use. You have private novel reading, and then public listening and reading time. What types of novels do the children like hearing you read excerpts from?
- L.S. I start the year by reading novels with animal characters. For example, I started this year by reading Beverly Cleary's The Mouse and the Motorcycle. That was just a fun story that they probably could read on their own, but what happens is it inspired them to read other Beverly Cleary books; it inspired them to read other books about Ralph, the Mouse--there are three or four in the series--but then they started to write stories about Mouse and his motorcar, Mouse and his airplane, Mouse and his helicopter. They had great fun with that, and I could always refer back to Ralph the Mouse, whenever we wanted to talk about an issue or something, or use it as an example.

Sharing aloud increases sensitivity. Some books, such as The Magician's Newpew by C. S. Lewis, make them want to read more, and find out what happens. It's a good cliffhanger book. We'll all read the first book in the series and they will go out and get the others to read. As a matter of fact, the students made a point of collecting the C. S. Lewis books last year after my reading The Magician's Nephew. Abel's Island by William Steig is another interesting novel; it's a story about a mouse who's trapped on an island, but I found that the children talked about things such as survival and what matters in life. They went much deeper by sharing and talking about it. Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt also talks about living forever, and when I introduced the book, I talked about who would like to live forever, and many hands went up. They thought it was very appealing, but this book brings out some of the things that we wouldn't have by living forever.

Another theme that I used was "getting along", a friendship theme, and I talked about my favourite author, Robert Newton Peck. That lead me to Stone Fox by John Gardner, which really intrigued

the children. It is the story of an Indian and a boy who takes care of his grandfather. They found it very exciting and also very moving. It's very rewarding to have the students moved while the story is being shared by the whole class.

The Book of Three series by Lloyd Alexander I found a bit difficult for the juniors, but if you read a book aloud and read a book that they might not pick up and select on their own, they can share in a more difficult novel. "Author of the Month" is another idea that works in the classroom, so if it's the book that I am reading aloud to the class, such as The Pinballs by Betsy Byars, then Betsy Byars becomes the author of the month. We have a list on the board, and a shelf of Betsy Byars books which I have in the classroom and they also select in the library. If they enjoyed The Pinballs, I have a few other books that might intrigue them about foster children, such as The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katharine Paterson.

Another way of responding that's worked very successfully is the diary form--where they become the character. By understanding the problems of the character they talk about the problem as if they were that character.

They could also read a portion of the book to the class and become the character in the novel as the class asks questions of them as this character. Through role-playing, the students learn more about the story and I learn what the students understand.

D.B. How do you yourself keep up on all these new novels?

L.S. I make frequent visits to children's bookstores, and I try and find out from other teachers what books are being enjoyed by their classes. I make a collection of books on a particular theme that we are studying.

D.B. What about the library?

L.S. The librarians have been very supportive in providing books when they know that I am working on a theme. As well I can send the children to the library to find books by other authors around that theme.

D.B. How much class curriculum cross-fertilization happens from the reading that either you do or

they do? Do they read in social studies, or in science?

L.S. When it comes to non-fiction material, I want them to gather information, I want them to use and share the information. Byrd Baylor, for example, writes natural science material that's so beautiful.

D.B. What about reading tests?

L.S. I don't use them in my classroom, and I don't use them for reporting.

D.B. How do you know then at the end of the year where a child is on his record card? What do you tell the teacher about his reading ability using literature? Do you have a sense from what he's read where he is, is that the idea?

L.S. Yes. For example, is their interpretation literal, or have they talked about some of the issues and inferences. In my Board we are required to give generalized reading tests, and that's another handle for me to assess with. One thing the kids see about me from the start of the year is that I love books and that reading matters. It's something that's been initiated in the classroom. And what's rewarding for me is to see this happening in their own lives. I initiate book clubs and I find the students are buying their own books. We make visits to a bookstore and they can select their own books. They are, I find, in the year that I've spent with them, developing their own libraries and the parents verify this. They say that the kids are always interested in having books of their own. I encourage them to have their own books to share with a friend. We have a "readathon" in the school program, too, which has been a great stimulus because the kids want to read a great deal over a certain period of time.

D.B. Is the competitive side there?

L.S. I've heard that complaint, but it hasn't been a competitive thing because I never talk about the winning/losing issue; if you read one book in three weeks and somebody reads twenty, then you've got one book that's very special to you.

D.B. Does the librarian do book talks?

L.S. The librarian does some book talks with the students. She doesn't work with the whole class. She will talk to some children about certain books that they might want.

- D.B. Informal visits rather than class visits?
- L.S. Yes.
- D.B. And do the class have structured visits to the library?
- L.S. Only if we are working on a particular research topic.
- D.B. Do they ever meet an author?
- L.S. It's a program that I initiated at my new school that we are going to have authors visit. We are going to be having the poet sean o'huigan visit, we are also going to meet Gordon Korman. Bernice Therman Hunter wrote That Scatterbrain Booky, I am hoping that she'll make a visit to the class. Because I attend workshops and visit bookstores I have some autographed books that are dedicated to the class.
- D.B. Do you have a special time in the day when they read?
- L.S. Again that was established and made important to the children at first that every day we will have silent reading time. This year they did it first thing in the morning. They came in and they had the book selected before the opening exercises and they were reading for 15 or 20 minutes to start the day. Today I asked the students whether they like the morning or the afternoon and they chose the afternoon to finish off the day reading. But they will definitely hear a story from me every day or part of a novel, they will always read silently every day. And of course, they will always write something every day.
- D.B. Do you use any anthologized readers in your classroom?
- L.S. I only choose stories from the anthology that relate to a theme. I start at the beginning of the year using readers and let the students choose from the reader the stories that they want to read.
- D.B. During an individualized reading time?
- L.S. I meet in a group and discuss some questions or issues that were in the story.
- D.B. How does spelling or vocabulary grow from either your shared or private reading time?

- L.S. When I read aloud to them, I'll stop on a word and we might discuss it and they find that they might use the word in a story that they are writing.
- D.B. So they are picking up these literary words and patterns in their own stories?
- L.S. Yes, and so when they come to a story that they are reading they might question the word if it's important to the story. We had a chart on the board of words that were familiar and that kept cropping up. Last year I had the students select a new word-of-the-day that they found in their story. We wrote them on the board at the end of the week, we talked about these words and what the meanings were.
- D.B. Do they do any private writing in journals? Is all your writing public in that it's given to you? Are you the only audience for their writing?
- L.S. No, they keep a writing folder, and I can't have them share everything with me, so they get to choose what they want to share with me. While they are writing they love to share with each other, so I encourage that a lot, so that it becomes public that way.
- D.B. That's a good point. What accounts for the impact of reading on these children's lives? Is it the fact that you read, they read, that they write? What causes the growth in the reading of a child?
- L.S. The availability of the books. In my classroom I make books available.
- D.B. Particular books for particular children?
- L.S. Yes.
- D.B. And is that the main thing, you think? If books are there, will they all read?
- L.S. Yes. Because there are many varieties of books, and they can choose what they want to read. I can suggest books that they might want to read, but I never give a book to a student and say, "Read this", or "I want you to read this". It won't matter to the students, and I think it has to matter to them in some way, so I might find their interest and suggest the book, or "Give it a try, three chapters, and let me know if it's a book that you want to pursue", but I do not present a book to the class and say, "You have to

have this finished in three weeks, we are going to have a discussion during the week". I let them choose what they will read.

D.B. Do your children read orally?

L.S. I believe that students shouldn't be made to read aloud unless they practice, either through choral speaking techniques or readers' theatre techniques, where they as a group decide how they are going to present the story orally. If they want to read a part to me, that's reading aloud, but the students never read aloud unless they have a reason for doing so. When we've finished our silent reading time, I'll say, "Turn to your partner and tell them what you've read or read something that you want to read". I'll have them read it to themselves and then they read it aloud.

That's how Larry Swartz shares stories--and nurtures a generation of children who read because they want to, and because they know that books contain something they may want to know.

Epilogue to Chapter Seven

Finding Books--and Deciding What To Read

In Ontario we are fortunate to have many bookstores that specialize in children's literature. And we have good local libraries too, and good librarians. If you live in Metro Toronto you have easy access to local libraries, children's bookstores and The Children's Book Centre. If you live in Madoc or Atikokan or North Bay, then your resources are very different and so are your requirements. Encourage your local booksellers to carry a wide range of children's books. And keep your school and community librarians aware of your needs.

Interests and abilities of students vary. As an individual teacher in an individual class, you still have to decide what books to share with your students: what to read to them and with them; and what books to give them to read on their own. Those decisions--to a degree anyway--are shared by you and your students. You are supposed to teach them to read and write and to love literature. Reading is supposed to be pleasurable, so it is important to convey to your students the sense that they can go home and read rather than watch TV.

So when you think about books for the classroom, try to strike a balance between classics and new books, realism and fantasy, Canadian books and books from other countries, different kinds of poetry, plays, fairytales, folktales, ballads, fables, legends, myths, Bible stories, adventure stories, novels, short stories, magazines, biographies, baseball cards, books about science, mathematics, and picture books.

Remember that stories are adaptable. Picture books are as suitable for older children as they are for younger ones. And quite complex myths and folktale, (particularly the Greek myths, and Arthurian legends) are loved equally by both medieval scholars and very small children. In fact when a version of "Gawain and the Green Knight" was produced as a Christmas play by the National Theatre in England, it was advertised as being suitable for children from the age of six. But you still have to be careful about sharing books with children. Remember that if you don't like a book, the chances are you are not going to convince your

students to like it, no matter how hard you try. But if you find a book you like, share it with your class, your colleagues and your friends. Good luck.

Chapter 7: Our Own Story

Short Bibliography

This list of books for children complements the list of books for teachers (about connecting children and books in Chapter Five). And the emphasis is on who we, as Canadian readers, are.

One of the special things about reading a story about a place you know is that there is secret delight, secret knowledge in recognition--the streets, buildings, stores, trees, beaches, people, local gossip, in-jokes, whatever. It gives you a feeling of privileged closeness to the author; makes you look at familiar things with new eyes; and allows for the possibility of magic in your own backyard.

The following list of books just hints at the depth and breadth of the range of Canadian material that is available. It is a deliberately idiosyncratic list--some favourites (like Mordechai Richler and Dennis Lee) have been omitted so that some less familiar authors (or less familiar books by well-known authors) can be brought to your attention.

Atwood, M. Anna's Pet. Toronto: Lorimer, 1980.

Bilson, G. Hockeybat Harris. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1984.

Carrier, R. The Hockey Sweater. Montreal: Tundra, 1984.

Dereume, A. and Zola, M. Nobody. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1983.

Harrison, T. A Northern Alphabet. Montreal: Tundra, 1982.

Hudson, J. Sweetgrass. Edmonton: Tree Frog Press, 1984.

Hutchins, H. The Three and Many Wishes of Jason Reid. Toronto: Annick, 1983.

Kellarhals-Stewart, H. Stuck Fast in Yesterday. Toronto: Groundwood, 1983.

Kleitsch, C. and Stephens, P. Dancing Feathers. Toronto: Annick, 1985.

Kleitsch, C. and Stephens, P. A Time To Be Brave. Toronto: Annick, 1985.

Kouhi, E. North Country Spring. Moonbeam: Penumbra, 1980.

- Kovalski, M. Brenda and Edward. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1984.
- Lunn, J. The Root Cellar. Markham: Penguin, 1983.
- Mackay, C. The Minerva Program. Toronto: Lorimer, 1984.
- Munsch, R. Thomas's Snowsuit. Toronto: Annick, 1985.
- Reaney, J. The Boy with the R in his Hand. Erin: The Porcupine's Quill, 1984.
- Thompson-Seton, E. Wild Animals I Have Known. Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1977.
- Stinson, K. Red is Best. Toronto: Annick, 1982.
- Stren, P. Sloan and Philamena. New York: Dutton, 1982.
- Wallace, I. Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance. Toronto: Groundwood, 1985.
- Wynne-Jones, T. Zoom At Sea. Toronto: Groundwood, 1980.

Ten We Like

Throughout this book we have stressed the need to diminish age and grade barriers. Nevertheless, we know that it is a lot easier to have a quick list at your fingertips than to hunt and peck. So these are lists of ten books we like--classified roughly according to age range. But do not be constrained by the guide--and feel free to disagree.

6-8 Year Olds

Briggs, R. Jim and the Beanstalk. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Gilman, G. Jillian Jiggs. Toronto: Scholastic, 1985.

Haley, G. A Story, A Story. New York: Atheneum, 1970.

Heide, F. P. The Shrinking of Treehorn. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

Hughes, T., The Iron Man. London: Faber, 1971.

Lobel, A. Frog and Toad Together. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

Richler, M. Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.

Sendak, M. The Nutshell Library. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Turkle, B. Do Not Open. New York: Dutton, 1981.

Wallace, I. The Sandwich. Toronto: Kids Can, 1975.

9 - 11 Year Olds

Babbitt, N. The Devil's Storybook. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1984.

Cleary, B. Dear Mr. Henshaw. New York: Dell, 1983.

Doyle, B. Angel Square. Toronto: Groundwood, 1984.

Byars, B. The Midnight Fox. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

Nesbit, E. The Phoenix and the Carpet. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Pearce, P. Tom's Midnight Garden. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Park, R. Playing Beatie Bow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.

White, E. B. Charlotte's Web. New York: Harper and Row, 1952.

Williamson, H. Tarka the Otter. London: Bodley Head, 1982.

12-14 Year Olds

Adams, R. Watership Down. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Haig-Brown, R. The Whale People. New York: Collins, 1982.

Farmer, P. Charlotte Sometimes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

Garner, A. The Stone Book Quartet. New York: Collins, 1982.

Hoban, R. The Mouse and His Child. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Holman, F., Slake's Limbo. New York: Dell, 1974.

LeGuin, U. The Wizard of Earthsea. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.

Lunn, J. The Root Cellar. Markham: Penguin, 1983.

Mahy, M. The Changeover. New York: Scholastic, 1985.

"IN MY END IS MY BEGINNING"

(T. S. Eliot, "East Coker")

Although this is the end of the book, this is the most basic question: "What is a story?" It looks simple enough. The Oxford English Dictionary says, among its definitions, that a story is "a recital of events that have or are alleged to have happened; a narrative designed for the entertainment of a hearer or reader". But that definition says little. It doesn't account for the persistence and vitality of stories.

Growing with Books is about the humanity of stories. It is about the power of imagination and the power of imaginative literature. It is not about turning Winnie-the-Pooh stories into honey projects. What we have tried to do is give you, as teacher, a literary language and critical vocabulary: a language that allows you to mediate between the child and the story; to draw attention to what is happening to whom and why; a language that holds the key to an ever growing community of story.

Stories all fit together in a cosmic game of infinite proportions. The more stories readers possess, the more able they are to play the game. Stories are acquired one at a time, word upon word. Words growing into stories. Ted Hughes explains, in a painfully lovely way, that words contain a whole "constellation, floating and shining" of "not just the crowded breadth of the world but all the depths and intensities of it too". As a single strand of DNA carries the code of a human being, as Blake sees the whole world in a grain of sand, so a word, say "crucifixion" contains a whole story about life and death and rebirth, a whole cosmic story: a "constellation"--enfolding and revealing the breadth, depth and intensity of the world. In the end, says Ted Hughes, words and stories live within us, they "remain part of the head that lives our life, and they grow as we grow. A story can wield so much! And a word wields the story".

Contributors

JOHAN AITKEN (Myth, Legend and Fairytale: Serious Statements of our Existence). All we have are stories; educating the imagination of all children through the development of narrative consciousness is, for Johan Aitken, the hope of the world. She is a professor in the Curriculum Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

BEVERLY ALLINSON (Cross-Age Tutoring in Writing) works to bring books and children together, believing that good stories feed the imagination and the spirit. She writes with children, and for them, in Toronto.

DAVID BOOTH (Our Own Words and the Words of Others: Two Parts; "Would You Rather . . .: Looking at Drama and Story) cares about books and children and helping teachers find ways of making those relationships stronger. He is a professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto.

DIANE DAWBER (Poem as Car) believes that children are self-propelled towards discovery. Poetry discovers. Let's celebrate the connection. She is a Kingston area poet and a teacher with the Lennox and Addington Board of Education.

KATHY LOWINGER (Canadian Magazines in the Classroom) believes that the books that feed the imaginative lives children ought to be the very best we can offer. She is the Director of the Children's Book Centre in Toronto.

JOAN MCGRATH (Canadian Novels in the Junior Classroom) wants to put the best possible books into children's hands, classrooms, and homes. She is a library consultant for the Toronto Board of Education and a freelance book reviewer.

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LISSA PAUL (What is Poetry?; Prologues and Epilogues) envisions a time when all children can share in the pleasure and power of imaginative literature. She teaches Children's Literature at York University in Toronto.

JO PHENIX (Our Own Words and the Words of Others: Part One) believes in giving all children access to literature--so that every reader, regardless of ability, gets the good stories. She is an English Consultant with the Peel Board of Education.

BRENDA PROTHEROE (Six Magic Words) is with the City of York Board of Education and wants to help students to find and to value their own voices through telling their own stories and responding to those of others.

JUDY SARICK (Finding the Right Book at the Right Time) loves to read. She is the owner of the Children's Bookstore in Toronto, and a former librarian.

PAUL SHAW (Storybook Reading and Literacy) believes that teachers are the key to children's attitudes to literature. He is the principal at Floradale school in Mississauga.

LARRY SWARTZ (Our Own Words and the Words of Others: Part Two) enjoys exploring the connections between books, himself, and other readers. He is a Language Arts Resource teacher with the Peel Board of Education and an instructor at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto.

GORDON WELLS (Stories are for Understanding) believes that there is a story in everything, and that all stories are worth telling. He is a professor in the Curriculum Department, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

